

# The wonderful, wonderful SovietHistoryWiki

(as of August 3, 2019)

*All pages were written by intlnews, otherwise known as “Leftist Critic.” I don’t necessarily agree with everything I wrote or all the resources I used, looking back at it, but I still feel that this wiki, which measures 245 pages, is still a great resource to find out more information about the Soviet Union and socialist states during the Cold War. Enjoy!*

Please spend some time reading this FAQ so this subreddit does not overfill with questions that can be easily answered. If your question is not answered in the FAQ, please use the search feature. If you still have not found an answer, then feel free to post your question.

If you think something is missing from this list, or you have a proposed change, [please message the mods!](#)

The idea of this wiki is based off one [written by marxism-feminism](#), a mod on [Communism101's subreddit](#)

Also, please do not forget to check out the sidebar and other resources as needed.

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Via <https://old.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/index>

Why does this subreddit exist?

This subreddit is an effort to promote further understanding of Soviet history in a way that counters misconceptions due to opposition in certain Left circles, like those associated with the teachings of Leon Trotsky, and bourgeois scholarship which often maligns the Soviet Union for supposed "misdeeds."

This subreddit tries to help bring clarifications that allow questions like this one [about Soviet history](#) and this one about the [democratic nature](#) of the Soviet Union to be answered.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/aboutsubreddit/whyexist>

What time period does this subreddit cover?

This subreddit covers the early years of the Soviet government from 1917-1922 when it was under attack by fourteen countries in an imperialist assault known as commonly as the Russian Civil War. Some people could call this period the years of the Bolshevik government since the Soviet Union did not formally come into existence until December 1922. However, for the sense of consistency, this period (1917-1922) can be called the first Soviet government. The time period on this reddit lasts from 1917 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/aboutsubreddit/timeperiod>

## What can I post on here?

Links or posts do not have to be from radical sources, but can be from bourgeois sources, whether they are media outlets or scholars, if deemed necessary. An example would be a set of pictures from a magazine, like Wired, let's say, but would be acceptable as it is still a part of Soviet history. Any posts from the Encyclopedia of Trotskyism on the Marxist Internet Archive will be deleted immediately. A good source to find information to post here is from [MassOnline](#), even though it has a lot of information relating to Communist China.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/aboutsubreddit/postonhere>

## Is there a good overview of Soviet history?

It turns out there is such an overview. It is still in development, but LeftistCritic, a good comrade, had begun compiling a history of the Soviet Union, starting in 1917 with the Bolshevik government. The first article in the series is titled "[The Great October Socialist Revolution and early history of the Soviet Union](#)". Also, this comrade had begun an online journal, called *Soviet History*, the first issue of which, [reprinting a section of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia on US history](#) is mentioned in another page of this wiki. Also, an article reviewing the history of the USSR as it relates to the Kellogg-Briand Pact is included [here](#).

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/overview>

## What are sources from bourgeois (non-socialist) scholars you would recommend?

There are many choices, but a few come to mind:

- *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Constructivism* by Christina Kaier (this book covers the NEP period and Russian constructivists pretty fairly except it then slimballs Stalin pretty easily)
- [Academic collection of flashpoints on Soviet history which is bourgeois, but passable](#)

Others will be added later.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/scholars>

## Where can I find information about the USSR on Reddit?

There are a number of resources, but here are a few:

- [images of the Soviet Union](#)
- [Cold War posters, many from Russia](#)
- [Soviet propaganda posters](#)
- [Soviet media](#)
- [Discussions on the Russian subreddit](#)
- [Links and discussion on alltheleft](#)
- [Military strategy and the USSR](#)
- [US images relating to the Soviet Union](#)
- [Colorized Soviet history](#)
- [Soviet science fiction](#) and a [related](#) subreddit
- [Pictures of Soviet life](#)
- [Soviet history on /r/history](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/relatedsubreddits>

## What are good resources about the Russian revolution?

Specifically here we are referring to the Great October Socialist Revolution or the October Revolution in 1917, not the bourgeois February Revolution the same year. Using the blogpost cited on [another page](#), such sources, some of which are [here](#), include:

- John Reed, [Ten Days That Shook The World](#)
- [Constitution of 1918](#) (to show what they accomplished, their progressive constitution after victory)
- Nadezhda K. Krupskaya, [The October Days](#)
- Antonio Gramsci, [The Revolution against 'Capital'](#)
- Morgan Philips Price, [Capitalist Europe and Socialist Russia](#)

There are more, so this is only a smattering.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/socialistrev>

## Soviet politics

This page focuses on Soviet politics.

1930s

- Emil Ludwig, *Joseph Stalin: An Interview with a German Author* (1932). No digital copy currently available.
- [Stalin reports on the status of party work in the countryside](#) (1933)
- [Criminal code of the Russian Socialist Federative Socialist Republic](#), 1934.
- [Stalin's Address Delivered in the Kremlin Palace to Graduates from the Red Army Academies](#) (1935)
- [Stalin's speech at the First All-Union Conference of the Stakhonovites](#) (1935)
- Josef Stalin, [On the Draft Constitution of the USSR](#) (1936)
- Josef Stalin, [Position of the Soviet Union](#), 1936.
- [Constitution of the USSR](#), 1936.
- [Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics](#) (1936)
- Josef Stalin, [Mastering Bolshevism](#), 1937.
- [Politburo](#), 1937.
- [US Ambassador intercedes for IBM during Stalin's Great Purges](#), 1937.
- [History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union \(1883-1937\)](#), 1937.
- [Stalin's Speech in Reply to Debate](#) (1937)

- Anna Louise Strong, [\*The New Soviet Constitution: A Study in Socialist Democracy\*](#) (1937)
- Pat Sloan, [\*Soviet Democracy\*](#) (1937) a work by a CPGB member who lived in the USSR.
- Josef Stalin, [\*Position of the Soviet Union\*](#), 1939.
- *The Electoral System of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*(1930s). No digital copy currently available.

1940s

- Sidney and Beatrice Webb, [\*Soviet communism: a new civilization\*](#) (1944)
- Edgar Snow, [\*The Pattern of Soviet Power\*](#) (1945)
- [\*Stalin's speech delivered to electoral voters in Moscow\*](#), February 9, 1946.
- Julian Towster, [\*Political Power in the U.S.S.R.: 1917-1947\*](#), 1948, an objective bourgeois work

1950s

- V. Karpinsky, [\*The Social and State Structure of the U.S.S.R.\*](#), a Soviet work, 1952.
- [\*The Doctors Plot\*](#) (people use this to accuse Stalin of anti-Semitism), 1953.

1970s

- [\*Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics\*](#), 1977 also see [here](#)

1980s

- [\*Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics\*](#), 1985
- [\*Working Versus Talking Democracy\*](#), 1982.

## Later analysis

- [How Soviet citizens shaped the their constitutions](#)
- [Our ultimate goal requires a working class state](#)
- [Anti-Stalinism and the legacy of “state socialism”](#)
- [Soviet Communism: A New Civilization](#)
- [The Russians are Coming: The Politics of Anti-Sovietism](#)
- [Soviet Democracy](#)
- [Soviet Library Scans 1](#)
- [Soviet Library Scans 2](#)
- [Soviet Library scans 3](#)
- [Soviet Library scans 4](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietpolitics>

# Who were the leaders of the Soviet Union?

While the Soviet Union was only officially in existence from 1922 to 1991, since the history of the Soviet state reaches back to 1917, it is worth acknowledging that as well.

## Vladimir Lenin

He was head of government from 1917-1918 of the Russian Republic, head of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1918 to 1924, and of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1924. During his time in power, after the Great October Socialist Revolution in October and November 1917, he:

- organized the Soviet government (1917-1918)
- nationalized the estates of the Russian Orthodox Church (1917)
- declared that any state had the right to cede from the new government (1917)
- created a new and revolutionary legal system in Russia (1917)
- implemented an eight-hour work day for all workers (1917)
- canceled all of Russia's foreign debts (1917)
- pushed for worker's control in the economy (1917)
- withdrew Russia from the imperialist world war with the Treaty of Brest-Livotsk (1918)
- engaged in a campaign to stop wealthy peasants or kulaks from hoarding grain (1918) which was later continued by Stalin
- worked to eliminate those classes of people who had suppressed Russians such as capitalist classes (1918)
- led the Soviet government through the civil war when fourteen foreign countries and other groups within the country tried to bring down the government (1918-1922)
- established the Red Army (1918)
- helped establish the Communist International or Comintern (1919)
- introduced the semi-capitalist New Economic Policy (NEP) to help rebuild the country after civil war (1921)

## Joseph/Josef Stalin

He was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee from April 1922 until October 1952. He was also Chairman of the Council of Ministers from May 1941 until March 1953.

After Lenin died in 1924, Stalin took more of a leading role in Soviet affairs. In his position as General Secretary, which he began in 1922, he was preceded by Vyacheslav Molotov (Responsible Secretary, 1921-1922), Nikolay Krestinsky (Responsible Secretary, 1919-1921), Elena Stasova (Chairman of the Secretariat of the Russian Communist Party, 1919), Yakov Sverdlov (Chairman of the Secretariat of the Russian Communist Party, 1918-1919), and Elena Stasova (Technical Secretary of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, 1917-1918). During his many years at the helm of the Soviet Union, Stalin:

- He pushed for rapid industrialization of Soviet society, ending NEP in 1926/1927, which was opposed by some advisers
- Continuing the push by Lenin, he began pushing for the collectivization of agriculture in order to counter the kulaks and help farmers (1927-1930s). This rapid move was opposed by some but it led to social changes in order to consolidate socialism
- He bolstered Soviet intelligence and agents in order to protect the Soviet state
- He worked to implement "iron discipline" in the Communist Party and state at large by engaging in the "Great Purge" as some called it, during the 1930s, to expel those seen opportunist or counter-revolutionary
- began a centrally-planned economy in the USSR, in 1928, with the first five-year plan, trying to ensure that industry grew with no capital inflow from the Western capitalist countries possible
- engaged in social liberalization with more social services in the country than ever before, including more rights for Soviet women
- promoting atheism through government functions and anti-religious propaganda, since religion was seen as bourgeois
- signing a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939 to keep the Soviet Union out of the war until the Germans broke it in 1941 (the same was the case with Japan in 1941 as well until the Soviets entered the war against Japan in 1945)
- helping to defeat the Nazis and Japanese fascists in their respective theaters. In fact, they played more of a role in defeating the Nazis and Japanese than is often admitted
- helped establish pro-Soviet governments in Eastern Europe, which had independent foreign and domestic policy but were supported by the Soviet Union as long as they were socialist and had centrally-planned economies, to say the least
- tried to push for German reunification in 1952 and for superpowers to disengage from Central Europe, but Western capitalist states rejected this
- assisted the communist parties in China and Korea, leading to the development of the People's Republic of China (1949) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) (1948)
- tacitly allowed the Korean army to begin the Korean war (in 1950) by invading South Korea
- originally supported the creation of Israel in 1948 but later changed his mind

#### Nikita Khrushchev

After his death in 1953, he became the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee, proceeded by Georgy Malenkov after Stalin abolished the office of General Secretary in 1952. While in power, from September 1953 until October 1964, he softened on many of the measures that Stalin had proposed:

- In 1956, he gave the "Secret Speech" which condemned Stalin in more ways than not. This led to the creation of the "anti-revisionists" who defended Stalin's legacy
- "liberalized" the arts to give it more "freedom" (in the "Khrushchev thaw") from government control, control which made sure it was socialist and helped advance the Soviet state



- reformed tribunals of security agencies established by Stalin to ensure the security of the Soviet state
- advocated cultivation of Soviet land with corn (maize), an experiment which did not succeed
- sought to bring agricultural education, used in the US, to the Soviet Union, including creating specialized schools for the arts, mathematics, sport, and so on, along with trying to reform the education system
- he tried to remove conventional weapons so his reforms in the domestic economy could occur
- he was more friendly with Western capitalists than Stalin by far
- he believed that public perception that the Soviets were ahead in space would lead to concessions from the West
- he was shocked when he learned the U-2 spy plane over Russia had been ordered by Eisenhower, reached out to US ambassador for help
- he tried to woo Third World states, which had become independent, while at the UN in 1960, including decrying colonialism and engaging in the much debated "shoe-banging incident"
- he help launch the first manned spaceflight, a victory over the US, in April 1961, and had another propaganda victory with the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion the same year
- after some tension, he allowed the leader of East Germany, Earl Ubricht, to build the Berlin Wall in August 1961
- as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the Soviets put missiles in Cuba to protect it from possible invasion, the Soviets suffered a propaganda defeat
- signed the test-ban treaty with the United States in 1962
- helped suppress the Western-supported uprising in Hungary in 1956
- improved relations with Yugoslavia, led by Tito, who Stalin realized he could not keep in line in 1948
- tensions between China and the USSR rose after the "secret speech" in 1956, with Mao saying destalinization was not positive, and tried to poke at US-USSR detente; ultimately this led to the Sino-Soviet split

### Leonid Brezhnev

After Khrushchev was removed, Brezhnev became the General Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee. He served in that position from October 1964 until November 1982, along with serving as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium from May 1960 to July 1964 and June 1977 to November 1982. During his time as General Secretary:

- the country was led by a "collective leadership" including Brezhnev and other high officials
- ended the "liberalization" in culture, with a few trials of those deemed as counter-revolutionary but no purges or bigger efforts to protect the Soviet state as Stalin had done in "purges"
- helped the Soviet Union grow from 1964 to 1973 with new Five-Year Plans, but unfortunately an economic decline after that point

- reinforced the usual methods for organizing collective farms, with Khrushchev's policy in this area continued
- the economic decline was seemingly a result of the arms race with the United States, participating in international trade, along with other factors
- increasing standard of living even during the economic decline and social benefits still extended
- continued detente with the Western powers with signing of certain treaties such as the ABM Missile Treaty
- supported communist guerrillas in Vietnam (reversing Khrushchev's policy) and elsewhere in the world that were opposed to the U.S.
- extended their influence and assistance across the Middle East and the African continent
- opposed the idea of Mao's "Cultural Revolution," seeing it as self-destructive
- began normalization of relations with China
- engaged in a war in Afghanistan to fight Islamic reactionaries and fight for socialism
- taking a hardline in the Prague Spring, opposing a non-revolutionary government in Czechoslovakia
- said that Poland would have to deal with its own problems, eschewing Soviet intervention and leading to the development of more anti-Soviet sentiment in Poland from the Western-backed Solidarity Union and other places

#### Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov

After Brezhnev's death, he was the General Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee, serving from November 1982 until February 1984. He was also Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium from June 1983 until February 1984, along with being head of the KGB from May 1967 until May 1982. While he was in power:

- He pushed for anti-corruption charges against those "cronies" who had been close to Brezhnev
- He continued the Soviet war in Afghanistan, tried to engage in negotiations
- relations with the US worsened, with the Soviets seeing peace movements in Europe as possibly forcing the West to capitulate on putting missiles in Europe
- declared that the USSR was stopped all space-based weapons in 1983
- Soviets, because of Reagan's aggressiveness, ended arms talks with the United States in 1983

#### Konstantin Chernenko

After Andropov's death in February 1984, Chernenko became the General Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee. He would serve in that position from February 1984 until March 1985, along with serving as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium from April 1984 until March 1985. While he was in power:

- supported a greater role for labor unions as he returned to ideas of the Brezhnev era
- advocated for reform in education
- negotiated a trade pact with China

- even though he called for detente, he did little to lessen tension with the United States seemingly, but the US and Soviets did agree to resume arms control talks
- in response to the US boycotting the 1980 Olympics in Moscow because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviets boycotted the 1984 games in the United States, organizing a "friendship games" held in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in the summer of 1984

### Mikhail Gorbachev

After Chernenko's death in March 1985, Gorbachev became the General Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee. He held this position until August 25, 1991. He also was the first President of the Soviet Union from March 1990 until December 1991, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet from May 1989 until March 1990, and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium from October 1988 to May 1989. While he is in power:

- he introduced glasnost (openness), perestroika (restructuring), demokratizatsiya (democratization), and uskoreniye (accelerated economic development)
- he tried to "revive" the Soviet economy by changing the political and social structures of the nation while putting in place Western changes to combat problems in the country
- perestroika (restructuring) was proposed in 1986, which entailed economic mechanisms, engaged in strong destalinization, even more than Khrushchev, and "liberalizing" political life, with "self-criticism," which brought in bourgeois influences of course
- glasnost (openness), began in 1988, involved more "freedom of speech" in the country with less control over the press, and released thousands of dissidents
- introduced the Law on Cooperatives in 1988 which permitted private ownership of businesses and led to splitting up of state-owned companies, a form of privatization
- he largely was hailed in the West, by the capitalists, for his "new" and "forward-thinking" reforms, with agreements with the US on arms control, removing Soviet nuclear weapons from Europe, ending the Afghanistan war
- abandoning the Brezhnev Doctrine, saying states in Eastern Europe could determine their own fate, and the Soviets would not intervene, leading to popular upheavals across the region and one of the factors in the dissolution of the USSR
- his economic policies brought the country into a state of disaster
- the August pro-Soviet, anti-Gorbachev coup in 1991 destroyed him politically and through the rest of 1991, until December, the government was in turmoil, ending Gorbachev's idea of creating a "social democracy" in the USSR

After Gorbachev left and the Soviet Union dissolved on December 26, 1991, the following day, Boris Yeltsin, his rival, took power, and "shock therapy" or mass privatization swept across the Soviet Union with disastrous effects.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietpolitics/sovietleaders>

## Miscellaneous articles and books

Here are other materials I'm not sure how to categorize.

- [About Trotsky](#)
- [Trotskyism](#)
- [Old denunciations](#)
- [Insults for counter-revolutionaries](#)
- [The end of totalitarianism: working in a socialist state](#), 2014.
- [The dialectic of goats: Stalin refutes the anarchists](#), quotes Stalin in 1906-1907.
- [Stalin's implicit criticism of Lenin](#), quotes Stalin in 1909.
- [Russian Army brings tanks to European border](#):

Well it did but not with hostile intentions. Since today is a holiday, 100th anniversary of the Red Army, Russian army brought a big deal of tanks, trucks etc to Invangorod... for display for the local people. Ivangorod is located right on the Estonia and European Union border. Here how it looked.

Thousands of people came to watch. Many came from Narva town which is in Estonia (and in European Union) just by crossing a bridge across the river which divides two countries.

They say that they even want to make a joint show with NATO somewhere in the future.

- [100 yr anniversary of Red Army](#):

Today is 100 years anniversary of the Red Army, so here is a few archive photos from Soviet news agencies with photos of Russian soldiers. Some are neat. Starting with a horse patrol the border guards in Kazakhstan, 1984.

More border guards, now in Tajikistan, USSR. 1967.

Soviet soldiers on the road block post in Afghanistan. 1988.

Soviet-Afghanistan border 1988.

Soviet artillery in Afghanistan, near the capital Kabul. 1988.

Russian army dance collective, 1978.

On the board of Soviet missile carrying submarine. 1968.

Minister of Defense Grechko (left from the left) watching military drill, 1970.

Ivan Kozhedub was a legendary WW2 pilot. Made 330 flights in 120 air fights downed sixty two enemy planes. Yakutia 1986.

- [Village only reached by helicopter](#):

Deep into West-Siberian taiga there is a small village of Russian old believers. To get to their place you would need a helicopter lift or you can try going by the river which is a very tricky way and you would need an experienced guide who knows the way.

The photographer got there by the river. The way was very hard to pass and to find. Lots of broken trees block the passages.

The village has only 150 members. Most of them are the Russian old believers living by very strict religious rules.

Old believers were always trying to escape oppressive governments. Both Tsar and Communists ones. That's why they get so deep into woods.

- [9 Unique Soviet All-Terrain vehicles](#)
- *Soviet Russia and the Baltic Republics* by Philip Farr

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/miscbooks>

## **The early Bolshevik government (1917-1922) and early years of the Soviet government (1922-1929)**

- [Lenin's April Theses](#), 1917.
- [Stalin on the European 'Left'](#), quotes Stalin in 1917.
- [Soviet Constitution](#), 1918.
- [Life of Peasants under Lenin's Rule](#)
- [Images of Lenin](#)
- [The Soviet Union and the Free Territory of Ukraine](#)
- ["Citizens, Preserve Historical Monuments"](#), 1919
- [Soviet communism: programs and rules; official texts of 1919, 1952 \(1956\) 1961](#)
- Pravda, [A Soviet report on agitprop trains](#), 1920.
- [First Soviet Criminal Code](#), 1922.
- [The euphoria of the USSR: quoting Stalin](#), 1922.
- [February 9, 1923](#): The Council of Labor and Defense of the USSR adopted a resolution "On the Organization of the Council for Civil Aviation." The first state company, Dobrolyt, was founded, renamed in 1932 to Aeroflot. The first route by which passengers could fly was the 420-km-long Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod air route. This date is the birthday of the civil air fleet of the USSR.
- USSR [criminal code](#), 1924.
- [Stalin on democracy, purges and Mars](#), quotes Stalin in 1924.
- [Socialism and vodka](#), quotes Stalin in 1925.
- [The Bolshevik policy on amputation](#) :

Most people would probably not know that the Communist Party of the USSR (Bolshevik) also had a policy on amputation. Stalin elaborates on the policy in 1925:

We are against amputation. We are against the policy of amputation. That does not mean that leaders will be permitted with impunity to give themselves airs and ride roughshod over the Party. No, excuse us from that. There will be no obeisances to leaders. (Voices: “Quite right!” Applause.) We stand for unity, we are against amputation. The policy of amputation is abhorrent to us. (Works, volume 7, p. 401)

- [The Institute of Red Professors and the Friends of the USSR](#), 1927.
- [Orders from Moscow?](#), 2015, quotes Stalin in 1927.
- [Extirpating bureaucracy with a red-hot iron: Stalin at the fifteenth congress](#), 1927.
- Frederick Lewis Schuman, [American Policy Toward Russia Since 1917: A Study of Diplomatic History, International Law & Public Opinion](#), 1928.
- Alexander A. Deineka, [Demonstration](#), 1928.
- Friends of the Soviet Union, [Socialist competition in the Soviet Union](#), 1929.
- [Man with a Movie Camera](#), 1929.
- USSR, [Smoke of chimneys - breath of Soviet Russia](#), circa 1920s.
- [Stalin on the English Labour Party](#), quotes Stalin in 1920s
- USSR, ["What interests you the most? The library has many books on the questions that interest you"](#), 1920s.
- W.P. and Zelda K. Coates, [Armed Intervention in Russia: 1918-1922](#), 1935.
- USSR, [The Bolshevik Party's Struggle Against Trotskyism: 1903-February 1917](#), 1969.
- USSR, [The Bolshevik Party's Struggle Against Trotskyism in the Post-October Period](#), 1969.
- A. Andreyev, [The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the Eve of the October Revolution: March-October 1917](#), 1971.
- S.A. Fedyukin, [The Great October Revolution and the Intelligentsia: How the Old Intelligentsia Was Drawn into the Building of Socialism](#), 1975.
- USSR, [The Great October Socialist Revolution](#), 1977.
- Yuri Avdakov and Vladimir Borodin, [USSR State Industry During the Transition Period](#), 1977.
- Y. Ambartsumov, [How Socialism Began: Russia under Lenin's Leadership 1917-1923](#), 1977.
- USSR, [Lenin and National Liberation in the East](#), 1978.
- [The Great Soviet Encyclopedia on the Great October Socialist Revolution](#), 1970s.
- V.A. Sakharov, [Forgery of Lenin's Testament](#), *Molniya*, date unknown.
- [Was life under communism better?](#), 2011.
- [Lenin, quick and gravelly-voiced](#), 2011.
- [Of lice, peasants and freedom: Arthur Ransome on the Russian Revolution](#), 2011.
- [Was the Russian Revolution a Success? Part 2](#), 2011.
- [Was the Russian Revolution a success?](#), 2011.
- [Lenin: The State and Revolution](#), 2012.
- [Imagine Stalin as a transport minister](#), 2014.
- Kate Zagorskina, [The USSR – the Democracy You Didn't Know About](#), 2015.
- [Life of Peasants under Lenin's Rule](#), 2017.
- [Soviet Stamps of Vladimir Lenin](#), 2017.
- [Wild Times: From the 1917 Russian Revolution to the Revolution of Our Times](#), 2017.
- [German gold and the #RussiaGate witch hunt](#), 2018.

- [Racism was illegal when communists ruled the USSR](#), PLP, 2018.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/earlyussr>

## The Soviet Union 1930 to 1940

- [First Five-year Plan Of The Soviet Union](#), 1930.
- Valentina Kulagina, [To the Defence of the USSR, Poster](#), 1930.
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“Russia has saved over ten times as many Jews from Nazi extermination as all the rest of the world put together,” James N. Rosenberg, American Jewish leader, declared here today in an address of welcome which he delivered at a reception given at the Astor Hotel to Solomon Mikhoels and Itzik Feffer, the Jewish cultural delegation from Russia. The reception was attended by several hundred representatives of various Jewish organizations. Emphasizing that he based his estimate of those saved on facts gathered by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Mr. Rosenberg quoted the organization’s journal as reporting that “of some 1,750,000 Jews who succeeded in escaping the Axis since the outbreak of hostilities, about 1,600,000 were evacuated by the Soviet Government from Eastern Poland and subsequently occupied Soviet territory and transported far into the Russian interior and beyond the Urals. About 150,000 others managed to reach Palestine, the United States, and other countries beyond the seas.” “We Jews,” Mr. Rosenberg said, “rightly give thanks for the innumerable resolutions of sympathy for Jews, adopted by well-meaning men and groups horrified by the hideous tragedy

which has befallen our people. Russia has chosen deeds. She has given life, asylum, bread, and shelter to a vast Jewish population. These facts are not sufficiently known. To make them known to every Jew in this country is a task of supreme importance for the Jewish Council for Russian War Relief. Need I ask what would have happened to those Jews had Russia left them where they were?" Commenting on Jewish life in Russia in 1926, when, as chairman of the Agro-Joint, he visited the Jewish colonies there, Mr. Rosenberg said that "a world which prays for a just and durable peace has a big lesson to learn from Russia's treatment of minorities." "Let us take a global glimpse," he continued. "Palestine's low ceiling for Jewish immigration must and will be lifted. To that end the Jews must strive. But even so, Palestine cannot alone solve the problem of the Jews of Europe. As for the rest of the world, when thirty-two nations were convened at Evian by that great humanitarian, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to give help to refugees, only that generous little nation, the Dominican Republic, offered asylum for a substantial number. What since then? The Bermuda Conference? The least said the better. Nevertheless we still look to the Western Hemisphere, many of whose lands are underpopulated. The after war world will tell a new story. "Weighed down as we have been by the unparalleled sufferings of European Jewry, we turn also to that vast and gallant country, Soviet Russia whose man power has spilled its life blood on the field of battle; will it perhaps replenish some of its lost man power with Jews of Europe? There is a land where anti-Semitism is a crime against the State, where human beings are actually given an equal chance in life, whatever the color of their hair or skin, the shape of their noses, the slant of their eyes. That is what we Jews ask of the world, not for ourselves alone but for all men and as a sine qua non for world peace."

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Soviet forces were the first to approach a major Nazi camp, reaching Majdanek near Lublin, Poland, in July 1944. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans attempted to hide the evidence of mass murder by demolishing the camp. Camp staff set fire to the large crematorium used to burn bodies of murdered prisoners, but in the hasty evacuation the gas chambers were left standing. In the summer of 1944, the Soviets also overran the sites of the Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka killing centers...the Soviets liberated Auschwitz, the largest killing center and concentration camp, in January 1945...Soviet soldiers found over six thousand emaciated prisoners alive when they entered the camp. There was abundant evidence of mass murder in Auschwitz. The retreating Germans had destroyed most of the warehouses in the camp, but in the remaining ones the Soviets found personal belongings of the victims...In the following months, the Soviets liberated additional camps in the Baltic states and in Poland. Shortly before Germany's surrender, Soviet forces liberated the Stutthof, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbrueck concentration camps.

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<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/lastyears>

## Where can find Soviet propaganda posters?

This is always a great question. Here are some sources I know of, other than Soviet Visuals, which is mentioned in another page of this Wiki:

- [SovietPosters.com](#) (has Soviet posters through all of Soviet history, in numerous different categories)
- [List of fifteen revolutionary posters](#) (this source is obviously bourgeois, but the posters are genuine)
- [Powerful propaganda posters](#) (like the previous link, this analysis is bourgeois, but the posters are still pretty great)
- [Has six propaganda posters from the 1920s and 1930s](#) (not much analysis, mainly just shows the posters)
- [Huffington Post, I know, but it has pictures of great posters](#)
- [Seven decades of propaganda posters](#) (this is the Guardian, but the posters are wonderful)

- [33 posters from the Space Age](#) (bourgeois source, but interesting)
- [Propaganda posters of the Soviet era](#) (again, a bourgeois source, but the posters are just reaching out to be looked at)
- [Anti-US propaganda posters](#)
- [Soviet propaganda posters during WWII](#) (a bourgeois source, but worth looking at)
- [Space Age propaganda posters](#) (only about selling posters, but has some of the images)
- [Wikimedia has over seventy images of propaganda](#)

More may be added in the future.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/propaganda>

## Feminism and women's rights

- Soviet Information Bureau, [WOMEN IN U.S.S.R.](#), focusing on 1926 and 1927, says the following:

"IN the Soviet State women have the same rights and privileges as men in all social and political matters, in respect to property rights and in respect to equal pay for equal work. Many women hold high executive posts in public life, especially in cultural and health activities. Many women are members of boards of directors of trusts, or serve as directors or assistant directors of factories.. In the laws regulating domestic life the woman's rights are in every respect the same as those of the man. The wife's property is her own, and marriage settlements which affect her property rights are invalid. Marriage has no effect on the citizenship of either party. A wife does not have to follow her husband to another place of residence. Special laws - such as that providing for an adequate vacation period with pay for women in industry before and after childbirth - are designed for the protection of women as mothers and for the protection of their young offspring."

- [Socialism and feminism: Collective farm shock workers:](#)

Stalin and women: this conjunction usually evokes salacious details of Stalin's somewhat active life as a young man, leaving a number of offspring across Russia. But in this he was no different from many other young Georgian males.

Far less known is the way he came to see, later in life, the importance of socialism for women. On many occasions, he addressed women's congresses, let alone framing the Constitution of the USSR (1936 revision) to address explicitly equality of the sexes. Article 132 of what has been called an 'affirmative action' constitution reads:

Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. The possibility of exercising these rights is ensured to women by granting them an equal right with men to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and by state protection of the interests of mother and child,

prematernity and maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens.

They often struggled to live up to ideals expressed and often acted hypocritically, as Alexandra Kollontai points out, but you can't fault the ideals. Needless to say, the USSR is usually written out of the history of feminism – as with so many other matters. As the constitution was in its final stages of being formulated, Stalin addressed a gathering of collective farm women shock workers. His speeches at earlier women's congresses may have been somewhat patronising, but here the issue of socialism and women gains clear expression:

Comrades, what we have seen here today is a slice of the new life we call the collective life, the socialist life. We have heard the simple accounts of simple toiling people, how they strove and overcame difficulties in order to achieve success in socialist competition. We have heard the speeches not of ordinary women, but, I would say, of women who are heroines of labour, because only heroines of labour could have achieved the successes they have achieved. We had no such women before. Here am I, already 56 years of age, I have seen many things in my time, I have seen many labouring men and women. But never have I met such women. They are an absolutely new type of people. Only free labour, only collective farm labour could have given rise to such heroines of labour in the countryside. (Works, vol. 14, p. 85).

Then are posters promoting feminism.

- [Soviet feminism: Pasha Angelina](#):

While on the topic of tractors, we can't forget Pasha Angelina (Praskovia Nikitichna Angelina). The story goes that after the first collectivisation wave, in 1933 Pasha organised an all-female tractor brigade in the Donetsk region. It exceeded its quota by 129%, producing more than any other team in their region. She became a new labour hero: young, strong, enthusiastic, from an ethnic minority.

Invited to the Kremlin, elected to the supreme soviet of the USSR, organiser of even more women's tractor teams, winner of the Stalin Prize in 1946 ... still, she preferred to drive tractors. As this article puts it, she became a symbol what might now be called Soviet feminism – except that by now such feminism was almost half a century old.

There is even some rare footage of Pasha at the Kremlin, with Stalin and the others.

Of course, there's a down side to all of this. Her husband didn't know how to relate to a strong woman, eventually leaving and drowning his sorrows in vodka (any excuse, really). And a lifetime working with tractor fuels and oils destroyed her body's ability to clear the toxins, so she died at 46.

- [Soviet Feminism - International Women's Day](#), illustrations over the years, specifically in 1944, later 1950s, 1963, later 1960s, early 1970s, 1970s, 1985, 1988, and 1991.
- Nina Belyaeva, [Feminism in the USSR](#), written in the 1980s after Gorbachev introduced perestroika. Bourgeois scholar.

- Shoshana Keller, [Trapped between State and Society: Women's Liberation and Islam in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1926-1941](#), 1998. Bourgeois scholar.
- Dave Crouch, [The Bolsheviks and Islam](#), 2006. Pro-Trotsky, anti-Stalin account. Not surprisingly because they are damn Trotskyists. As such, a quote of their work will not be put in the below text.
- Molly Wolanski, ["The Role of Women in Soviet Russia"](#), 2012? Possibly an objective bourgeois account.
- [Lenin the Nudist](#):

A lesser known aspect of the Russian Revolution is the flourishing of ... nudism. After the revolution, the famous actress, Ida Rubenstein, played naked on stage. The poet Goldschmidt would appear naked on the streets. A movement called 'Down with shame' would walk the streets in Soviet cities, catch trams, go about their daily lives wearing nothing but a red sash over their shoulders. A White Army newspaper joked in 1919 that the price of suits must have skyrocketed, since so many people were going around naked. At international nudist conferences in the 1920s, the Soviet delegates far outnumbered those from other countries. Over the summers, rivers, beaches and lakes witnessed millions of old people, children, families, singles in the prime of their life gathered to play games, picnic or enjoy the sun – all naked.

How did it begin? It appears that during his long exile before the Revolution, Lenin visited a nudist beach in Austria and was favourably impressed. It was not so much the naked bodies everywhere, but the emphasis on healthy living. Given that Lenin was – as many noted – a muscular man with a love of outdoor activities, nudism was a natural extension of that passion. Soon enough both he and Krupskaya were regularly tossing their clothes in a corner and diving into the nearest river, lake or sea completely starkers. I'm not sure whether they also hiked and rode their bicycles naked (ice-skating might be a little tricky), but in this light one of Lenin's favoured phrases, 'tearing off the fig-leaf', takes on a whole new meaning.

As do regular observations in the letters concerning swimming. For instance, Krupskaya writes about their stay at Pornic in France in the summer of 1910, 'He went sea-bathing a lot, cycled a good deal – he loved the sea and the sea breezes – chatted gaily with the Kostitsins on everything under the sun'. Of course, one can enjoy the breeze much more when naked, even while chatting away with all and sundry. It mattered not where they were, for they would swim naked – in Longjumeau or in Pornic on the French coast, or in Stjersund in Sweden, or in swimming pools in Munich, or in Poronino or in the Vistula River in Krakow. Nor were they alone, for other Bolsheviks were also given to stripping down whenever possible, among them Anatoly Lunacharsky, Nikolai Bukharin, Alexander Bogdanov.

After his return to Russia in 1917, Lenin bemoaned the fact that people still gathered in summer and swam in costumes, so he asked why they couldn't do so without clothes: 'We have much work to do for new forms of life, simplified and free', he observed.

Why? As one of those early communist nudists observed, 'In nudity class distinctions disappear. Workers, peasants, office workers are suddenly just people'. An image of a classless society, perhaps.

- [Stalin at Fox Bay nudist beach, Crimea](#), 2013:

Nudism was a particularly strong feature of the USSR, as also in East Germany. Lenin was, of course, a nudist, along with Krupskaya and many of the Bolsheviks. But what about Stalin? I have yet to find out more information on that one, but he is a long-term resident of Fox Bay nudist beach in the Crimea

- [Left out? Narratives of the history of \(bourgeois\) feminism](#), 2011:

Ever notice how the narrative of feminism roughly goes first-second-third waves, or 1890s, 1960s and 1980s, along with a few medieval precursors? Where the hell is socialist feminism in this narrative? All conveniently air-brushed out in a way that would make even Stalin jealous. To dismiss it as a 'patriarchal' feminism, following in the steps of Engels and Bebel misses some key feminists:

Alexandra Kollontai: revolutionary, Bolshevik, People's Commissar for Social Welfare, founder of the 'Women's Department' in 1919, champion of the Soviet policies of radical gender equality (world's first), tireless campaigner for women and world's first female ambassador – to Norway in 1923.

Rosa Luxemburg: a little better known, but usually through her letters and personal life and not as a socialist feminist activist and writer.

Clara Zetkin: along with Rosa, member of the German Communist Party, member of the Reichstag until 1933 (she escaped Hitler for the USSR) and organised the first International Women's Day in 1910.

All radical communists, all feminists, all carefully forgotten. It seems that Marxism really was the impetus for modern feminism.

- Adrienne Edgar, [Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet "Emancipation" of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective](#), 2012 article by bourgeois scholar.
- Polina Popova, ["Alexandra Kollontai's Feminism: Transnational Dimension"](#), 2013.

The following paper will demonstrate Alexandra Kollontai's involvement in European socialist and feminist movements and how she contributed to the transnational feminism. In order to do so the three of Kollontai's works will be analyzed. Kollontai for a long time was not seen by historians as a feminist and was little known among historians of feminism in American historiography. Now her feministic approach to social problems is well-established and she is considered one of the greatest Marxist Russian feminists. However, historical approach to Kollontai's feminism still rooted in Russian and Soviet narration, Kollontai is still placed by historians into the context of Russian history. This paper aims to reveal Kollontai's impact in transnational feminism. The paper claims that Kollontai's ideas on gender, sexuality, and women's rights were universal and not as strongly politicized as the scholars of Kollontai's heritage and Russian feminism considered before. Such transnational dimension of Kollontai's

feminism will help in better understanding the history of Euro feminism and will give an opportunity to understand Soviet history in a broader context.

Alexandra Kollontai was born in 1872 to a wealthy aristocratic family of Domontovich in St Petersburg, Russia. She was raised by English governesses in early childhood, and later educated by tutors from France and Germany; thus by the time she was ten Alexandra spoke five languages. After Kollontai received her higher education in Switzerland, she traveled through Europe, where she participated in different socialists' gatherings. Before the Revolution of 1917 Kollontai lived in Europe and there she became a prolific writer on the questions of sexuality, women's political rights, changes in the nature of relations between sexes, and women's roles in the family. Alexandra Kollontai is usually mentioned along with Vladimir Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya as one of the founders of Zhenotdel (Women's Rights and Education division of the Soviet government) or as a Soviet ambassador in Norway. However, she is still known among the general public in Russia Kollontai is known as an author of the glass of water theory.

For many years Kollontai was little known among Soviet and Russian historians of feminism because of her own intention to be in a shadow of more famous revolutionary politicians like Lenin and his wife Krupskaya; likewise because of the Soviet historiography which tended to depict Kollontai mostly as a Soviet diplomat and communist, never emphasizing her role in the international feminist movement. Soviet historians only spoke of her as a Soviet diplomat and intentionally underestimated her as a feminist and writer. In this way in Russian historiography Kollontai's works on feminism are little known, as well as practically unknown for the general audience. Additionally, Communist Party leaders criticized Kollontai for being "more feminist than Marxist. Independent voices of feminism were not heard in the USSR until the 1980s.

As Barbara Evans Clements, the author of an extensive Kollontai's autobiography, put it: young women like Kollontai "had more in common with the aristocrats of Vienna or London than they did with the illiterate, overworked peasants of their own country." Clements also speaks about the reasons why the question of women's rights was downtrodden in Imperial Russia, such as poverty of peasants and lack of free time for working women. Clements notes that for upper-class women society allowed some independence, and Kollontai was a prime example of an upper-class woman who educated herself in politics and philosophy. Clements writes: "Throughout Europe, feminism began as a question of emancipation for upper- and middle-class women."

Kollontai herself was quite skeptical about the notion of feminism, since she distanced herself from "bourgeois feminists," who, according to Kollontai, identified themselves as the enemies of men. Kollontai believed that only through socialist revolution could working women and men obtain freedom. Moreover, Kollontai had never used such feminist terms as "sexism" or "male chauvinism" typical for Western feminists and gender studies scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. However, Kollontai did not share Lenin's rejection of a sexual question as a topic for Marxist writers. She was not scared to openly criticize individualism, ignorance, and egoism in the relationships between men and women.



The three sources used for the research of the transnational dimension in Kollontai's works were written by Alexandra Kollontai between 1913 until 1926. First, her autobiography (1926), where she depicted her childhood, the cultural and social environment she was raised in, and her later acquaintance with European socialists. Second, Kollontai's pre-Revolutionary essay "The New Woman" (1913) will be analyzed in order to track her feminist ideas that were not only applicable for the Russian reality, but for other countries as well. In addition Kollontai's article "Make Way for the Winged Eros" (1923) will be analyzed in order to show how even her Soviet-focused texts were applied to other contexts.

### **The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman**

Alexandra Kollontai's autobiography was first published in 1926 in the USSR. Kollontai's attitude toward women's rights, her involvement in the Western feministic movement, and her own transnational feministic dimension will be demonstrated through textual analysis of her autobiographical work. From the very first chapter the reader can see how deeply Kollontai was preoccupied with the questions concerning women's liberation movement. "After all I still belong to the generation of women who grew up at a turning point in history," – wrote Alexandra Kollontai in the first chapter of her autobiography. She continued: "We, the women of the past generation, did not yet understand how to be free." In the beginning of the autobiography Kollontai only touched upon some facts of her childhood and early life. More important for Kollontai's narration was to connect the facts from her personal biography with understanding the freedom and how a notion of women's freedom developed. She wrote that for past generations of women "it was, in fact, an eternal defensive war against the intervention of the male into our ego, a struggle revolving around the problem-complex; work or marriage and love?" The universal value of Kollontai's ideas and their transnationalism can also be seen in her words about social justice: "Already as a small child I criticized the injustice of adults and I experienced as a blatant contradiction the fact that everything was offered to me whereas so much was denied to other children."

Through the facts of Kollontai's life and especially in the way she described quiet ordinary events, like getting married at the age of nineteen, it can be seen how early in life Kollontai was struggling for her personal freedom and how her views of marriage were contemporary and more along the lines of the end of nineteenth-century Western feminism, not yet shaped by socialist ideas and a Marxist environment. Although the autobiography itself was written during 1926 when Kollontai already was involved in the Soviet foreign policy, Kollontai's description of her life decisions were not mixed with Marxism or communistic ideology, and it can be well seen how they were driven by feministic ideals, and not by socialist philosophy. Kollontai refers to her decision to get married as a "struggle" which is concordant with the ideology of Western suffragists. She wrote: "My first bitter struggle against these traditions revolved around the idea of marriage. I was supposed to make a good match and mother was bent upon marrying me off at a very early age." Kollontai even called her decision not to marry early, as her older sister did, a "revolt," and such expression goes along the lines of nineteenth century Western feminism: "I revolted against this marriage of convenience, this marriage for money and wanted to marry only for love..."



Kollontai touched upon one of the central points in the ideology of Western feminism – marriage and how women's roles in it were changing. She described how her marriage to Vladimir Kollontai, an engineer student, was more or less happy for the first three years. She refers to those years of being a wife and later a mother to their son Mikhail as a “cage.” Here Kollontai used a word “cage” to explain her growing desire to participate in Russian political events, socialistic circles of Russian intellectuals, and to fight for women’s rights and social justice in Imperial Russia. Starting from 1893 until 1896 were the years when Kollontai’s life drastically changed. She became an “enthusiastic follower of Darwin,” and in this way materialistic conception of history became her field of interests. At the time she started sympathizing with the revolutionary movement in Russia, which became more and more popular among working class people, as well as aristocrats by the end of the nineteenth century. In order to become more educated in the field of materialistic philosophy, Kollontai entered Zurich University where she studied political economy. Kollontai’s early life and pre-revolutionary activities were finished by 1908, when she was arrested and immigrated to Germany as a political refugee. She briefly touched upon her life with Vladimir Kollontai, her separation from him, and nurturing her son. However, she characterized in detail her political activism, for example, opening the first Working Women’s club in 1907 in St. Petersburg. The way Alexandra Kollontai wrote about her early life highlighted her passion for politics and her fight for women’s rights. Her autobiography focused Kollontai's early devotion to the universal ideals of social justice, moreover it revealed Kollontai’s attitude to the problem of women's emancipation and the way she solved it in her personal life.

Alexandra Kollontai's revolutionary activity and desire to fight for social justice and working women's rights was influenced by German Marxist feminists Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg. Her European life and political experience shaped Kollontai's international feminist approach. Kollontai's depiction of her life and work in Europe is an essential one for this research, because Kollontai described her activity as an international feminist without calling herself an actual “feminist.” While living in Germany, France, Austria, Great Britain, Sweden, and Norway Kollontai was partially excluded from Russian political activity. She recalled to her earlier interest in women’s rights, however while living in Europe and actively participating in feminist organizations and their political activities her focus shifted from social justice in general to the question of justice for women in any country. From 1908 until 1917 she organized women’s strikes around Europe, as well as prolifically demonstrated herself as a writer – different essays and pamphlets along with her bigger works were published in German, English, and French and only then translated into Russian after the Revolution. She visited the USA for five months in 1915 for a series of lectures about international socialists, which she delivered in German, French, and Russian. Not only the international travels themselves, but the fact that Kollontai had put them in her relatively short autobiography speaks in favor of the international focus of her writings.

Kollontai's international approach to studying and answering so-called “women’s question” is demonstrated by her comparative studies of legislative systems of different European countries. It is seen in the work she performed in 1912 when she authored a bill on maternity welfare as a result of her research performed at the University of Basel. She mentioned that she “studied this question” of maternity welfare in England, France, and Scandinavian countries. The product of Kollontai’s research was a 600 page work “Motherhood and Society,” which was widely

popularized in Western European countries and Australia. From closer reading of her autobiography, it seems like almost all of her writing and political activity before her return to Russia in 1917 was connected to the question of women's rights and their comprehensive representation in European laws. The rhetoric of Kollontai's biography was influenced by her dedication to fight for women's rights around Europe. Socialism, Marxism, communism, her Russian roots and her past involvement in the revolutionary movement in Russia seemed to have waned, or at least just been overlapped, by her involvement in the European feminist movement. Compared to her earlier life in St. Petersburg, Kollontai's European experience, as she described it, was not as much determined by socialism or Marxist feminism, but more with the general question of justice and equal rights for women (and for men as well): "In 1912, in Paris, I organized the housewives' strike "La greve des menageres" against the high cost of living."

The significance of Kollontai's *Autobiography of A Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman* for understanding an international dimension of her feminism can hardly be overestimated. This work has always been crucial for the historians of Russian revolutionaries and biographers of Kollontai as a source of the information on Kollontai's life, especially her life in exile in Europe. Nevertheless, in American historiography research which touched upon this work was lacking close textual analysis and did not take Kollontai's internationalism into consideration. Kollontai's autobiography is a valuable source for the historians of Western feminism, since it demonstrates how Kollontai's involvement in the European movement for women's rights grew into her international feminist ideology later. It is important to trace not only internationalism of Kollontai's feminist ideas, but also their transnational dimension, or in other words – how such ideas were universal and could generally be applied to any woman in the world, regardless of her nationality. In order to do so, Kollontai's work "The New Woman" will be analyzed further.

## **The New Woman**

Kollontai's 1913 essay "The New Woman" was her earlier manifesto of transnational feminism. 1913 was the year of her most active work among European women. The essay was initially written while Kollontai lived in Germany and travelled a lot to France at the same time. It was first published in German where she was living in exile, so the intended audience was German and French people – both men and women. Later it was translated in Russian and was very much appreciated by Russian intellectuals, because it had plenty examples which came from Russian literature; however, "The New Woman" remains one of Kollontai's most famous works among Western scholars of women and gender studies. It was little researched by Russian scholars, who only looked at Kollontai as the Soviet politician and ambassador. Kollontai depicted her new woman as being the opposite of the "nice girl whose romance culminates in a highly successful marriage." The new women are usually single or at least, even if they are married, they are "ceased to play their subordinate role and to be no more than the reflex of the man." However, the main characteristics of Kollontai's new woman is not in her marital status, but in her inner world, which again – demonstrates Kollontai as being a writer well-educated in psychology, who tended to look for a more general picture of women, and not to label them on a basis of their nationality: "She has a singular inner world, full of general human interests, she is independent inwardly and self-reliant outwardly." In her statement Kollontai did not mention nationality or political views of a woman who can be called "the new woman"; moreover, she referred to the

“general human interests” which is more transnational than European or Russian, applied to any human being per se. Kollontai’s argument is that the new woman exists regardless of nationality or politics of the country she lives in reveals her transnational feminist approach to the question of women’s rights and social justice.

Kollontai came closer to a notion of a “single woman” and defined it. The single woman is the one who “strengthens through the exercise of her will;” she is “demanding,” she “seeks for and enjoins esteem for her personality,” demanding “respect for her “ego;” what makes her modern is that she can “forgive much to which the woman of the past would have found very difficult to reconcile herself,” for example lack of attention from her husband. Kollontai’s attempt to define the new woman is a brilliant example of the transnational feminist ideas in her writings. She did not write anything about the new woman’s nationality, her place in the social hierarchy, her wealth, education level, or political views, if there were any. “The New Woman” is a sui generis notion that Kollontai created as a basis for her transnational feminism.

What is crucial for understanding of Kollontai’s heritage as being a part of transnational feminism, is a central notion of “The New Woman” – the notion of independence, which the modern “new” woman can not only accept as part of herself, but appreciate it “increasingly, to the degree that her interests go beyond the narrow circle of the family, of the home, and of love.” The notion of independence here in “The New Woman” essay helps to complete the picture Kollontai had drawn. The word independence itself has universal meaning, so the fact that Kollontai used it only clarifies her transnationalism.

In addition Kollontai put her transnational feminist ideology in a contemporary framework. She concluded her essay with the review of who contemporary, new, single women were: they “become mothers without being married, they leave the husband or the beloved ...they will count themselves among “fallen creatures” as little as will... the modern reader.” Only at the very end of her essay did Kollontai add a social dimension to her research on the new women, saying that nowadays women participate in industrial life and it is not viewed as a deviation. Kollontai writes: “Working women set the tone of life, and from the character in respect to the image of the new woman of our time.” She did not argue that modern women of working class is a standalone group of the new women, and she did not refer to any country where working women live in particular. The words “working women” in her essay did not reflect upon her socialistic background and revolutionary ideology, but speak in of her perception of modern women in general, who – in order to become independent personally – have to work and gain financial independence. Kollontai completed her essay referring to the consciousness of the new women as “the feminine psyche.” With a portion of irony she wrote: “Woman, by degrees, is being transformed from an object of tragedy of the male soul into the subject of an independent tragedy.” The word “independent” brings us to the main argument of the paper: Kollontai demonstrated herself being not only internationalist, but more – a transnational feminist. She made an attempt to be an independent writer on the different aspects of women and gender studies at the time when women and gender studies did not exist as a standalone scholarly area and when a notion of “transnational feminism” was not used by historians and writers at all. To fully understand the transnational dimension of Kollontai’s writings it is important to look at her essay written in 1923 “Make Way for The Winged Eros,” which initially was intended for the

Soviet people – men and women, but appeared to be implicitly influenced by Kollontai's transnational feministic ideology.

### **\*\* Make Way for The Winged Eros\*\***

This paper demonstrates Kollontai's writings as been applied to different national, political, and cultural contexts. A vivid example of such work was "Make Way for the Winged Eros," where Kollontai spoke about the differences between "wingless eros" and "winged eros:" where the first one is physical sex and the second one is sex rich with emotions. Although this work was a very Soviet-focused essay which brought the examples from Soviet reality and where Kollontai spoke directly of the "labor communist society," "communist man," and "communist woman." This work is important for understanding Kollontai's transnational dimension. "Man and woman easily, much easier than formerly, much more simply than formerly, came together and separated," – this sentence exemplifies how Kollontai's ideas could be viewed in both Soviet and international contexts, because Kollontai did not specify whether it was "Soviet" or "Russian" man and woman. She wrote: "much easier than formerly." Even though she included a general timeframe, she did not put any geographical, social, economical, or cultural frames for these events. Even when she writes about Soviet people's sexual relationships, her mindset geared toward universal values. The sentence, mentioned above, if taken out of context of Kollontai's writing, could be applied to any European country at the first part of the twentieth century where women became emancipated. The drastic changes in the attitude toward marriage and sexual relationships happened during and after the World War I in all European countries, including Russia: people came together and separated "much easier than formerly." Kollontai's "Make Way for The Winged Eros" was the work focused on Soviet culture and was initially intended for the Soviet audience. However it was written in a way that the work appeared to have two layers of understanding – a Soviet, demonstrable and more obvious layer, and a hidden international one.

Kollontai's 1923 work "Make Way for the Winged Eros" seemed to stay apart from her political and feministic works; however it is important to include it in this research, since in "Make Way..." Kollontai wrote about a "new morality" without specifically referring to the country where that "new morality" developed. Although her three principals of the "new morality" were proclaimed to be made for the proletarian class in the USSR, they can be seen as being generally applied to people who were not only in the USSR and not only communists. Those principles – (1) equality in mutual relations, (2) mutual recognition of the rights of each other, and (3) comradely sensitivity – are universal and comprehensive, and in the 1920s could be applied to the relationships between men and women outside the USSR. Kollontai did not highlight such international dimension of her three principles specifically; in this way it was only included in her text implicitly and was covered under Soviet propaganda and specifically socialistic gear of the "Make Way for the Winged Eros."

### **Conclusion**

This paper has established how the literary heritage of Alexandra Kollontai can be applied to a broader cultural context; the examples from her works indicate her transnational feministic ideas. Being a political activist, Marxist, socialist, and prolific writer, Kollontai's ideas on the question

of equality of men and women, and of social justice were transnational in their nature. This paper has shown both international and transnational aspects of her writings which have not been acknowledged enough in the historical and feminist literature. Socialism itself is a political movement that is transnational, thus Kollontai's keenness on it and her friendship with German socialists and feminists, described in her autobiography, is another example of how her feminism was transnational: it could not be called specifically "Russian" or "Soviet," since it had universality in the form of her desire for social justice for women in all countries of the world.

In addition the paper has demonstrated how Kollontai's works need to be researched more assiduously by scholars of feminism, and also that more historical research needs to be done in order to highlight her activity in fighting for women's equality in Europe before 1917. The transnational dimension of Kollontai's works requires to revise the history of Western and transnational feminism, and it provides a new perspective on the Russian and Soviet history of the twentieth century. It is especially important for historians of the USSR and scholars of transnational feminism to look at Kollontai's socialistic feminism and her dedication to Marxist philosophy as a sign of the universality of her ideas about gender, sexuality, and women's rights. Thus, Kollontai's socialistic feminism was transnational.

- [Stalin the feminist](#), 2014.

How is that for a somewhat strange juxtaposition: Stalin and feminism. Of course, the real achievements of the Bolsheviks are usually written out of any history of feminism, since as we all know, it is really a Western phenomenon. The catch is that the likes of Kollontai, Zetkin and others did like to be known as feminists, since they saw it a distinctly bourgeois phenomenon. So perhaps Marxist or materialist feminism is a better term. But was Stalin one too? Here is his statement on International Women's Day in 1925:

There has not been in the history of mankind a single great movement of the oppressed in which women toilers have not participated. Women toilers, the most oppressed of all the oppressed, have never kept away from the high road of the emancipation movement, and never could have done so. As is known, the movement for the emancipation of the slaves brought to the front hundreds of thousands of great women martyrs and heroines. In the ranks of the fighters for the emancipation of the serfs there were tens of thousands of women toilers. It is not surprising that the revolutionary working-class movement, the mightiest of all the emancipation movements of the oppressed masses, has rallied millions of women toilers to its banner.

International Women's Day is a token of the invincibility of the working-class movement for emancipation and a harbinger of its great future.

If the working class pursues a correct policy, they can and must become a real working-class army, operating against the bourgeoisie. To forge from this reserve of women toilers an army of working women and peasant women, operating side by side with the great army of the proletariat—such is the second and decisive task of the working class.

International Women's Day must become a means of transforming the working women and peasant women from a reserve of the working class into an active army of the emancipation movement of the proletariat.

Long live International Women's Day! (Works, vol. 7, pp. 48-49).

- Stalin's Moustache, ["Soviet feminism: Pasha Angelina"](#), 2015.

While on the topic of tractors, we can't forget Pasha Angelina (Praskovia Nikitichna Angelina). The story goes that after the first collectivisation wave, in 1933 Pasha organised an all-female tractor brigade in the Donetsk region. It exceeded its quota by 129%, producing more than any other team in their region. She became a new labour hero: young, strong, enthusiastic, from an ethnic minority.

Invited to the Kremlin, elected to the supreme soviet of the USSR, organiser of even more women's tractor teams, winner of the Stalin Prize in 1946 ... still, she preferred to drive tractors. As this article puts it, she became a symbol what might now be called Soviet feminism – except that by now such feminism was almost half a century old.

There is even some rare footage of Pasha at the Kremlin, with Stalin and the others.

You can watch it here, with subtitles, or watch this compilation news item:

Of course, there's a down side to all of this. Her husband didn't know how to relate to a strong woman, eventually leaving and drowning his sorrows in vodka (any excuse, really). And a lifetime working with tractor fuels and oils destroyed her body's ability to clear the toxins, so she died at 46.

- [The peasant woman's 'brown eye'](#), 2015.

In an address to the first all-union congress of collective-farm shock brigaders (1933), Stalin deals with the processes of admitting individual peasants into collective farms. Some such farms were a little wary of accepting individual peasants who may not have been so keen on collectivisation. The reasons were many, such as this one about the peasant woman's brown eye:

Two years ago I received a letter from a peasant woman, a widow, living in the Volga region. She complained that the collective farm refused to accept her as a member, and she asked for my support. I made inquiries at the collective farm. I received a reply from the collective farm stating that they could not accept her because she had insulted a collective-farm meeting. Now, what was it all about? It seems that at a meeting of peasants at which the collective farmers called upon the individual peasants to join the collective farm, this very widow, in reply to this appeal, had lifted up her skirt and said—Here, take your collective farm! (Laughter.) Undoubtedly she had behaved badly and had insulted the meeting. But should her application to join the collective farm be rejected if, a year later, she sincerely repented and admitted her error? I think that her application should not be rejected. That is what I wrote to the collective farm. The widow was accepted into the collective farm. And what happened? It turns out that she is

now working in the collective farm, not in the last, but in the front ranks. (Applause.) Works, vol. 13, p. 261.

- Vicki Boykis, ["Being a woman in programming in the Soviet Union"](#), 2017.

Vicki's note: A couple weeks ago, I saw a really interesting clip on Twitter that showed students in the Soviet Union learning to program using pen and paper. My mom has often told stories about how she learned to program the same way, and I shared the tweet. Marie Hicks, a tech historian, reached out and asked if my mom would want to write about her experiences, and she did.

In 1976, after eight years in the Soviet education system, I graduated the equivalent of middle school. Afterwards, I could choose to go for two more years, which would earn me a high school diploma, and then do three years of college, which would get me a diploma in "higher education."

Or, I could go for the equivalent of a blend of an associate and bachelor's degree, with an emphasis on vocational skills. This option took four years.

I went with the second option, mainly because it was common knowledge in the Soviet Union at the time that there was a restrictive quota for Jews applying to the five-year college program, which almost certainly meant that I, as a Jew, wouldn't get in. I didn't want to risk it.

My best friend at the time proposed that we take the entrance exams to attend Nizhniy Novgorod Industrial and Economic College. (At that time, it was known as Gorky Industrial and Economic College - the city, originally named for famous poet Maxim Gorky, was renamed in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union.)

They had a program called "Programming for high-speed computing machines." Since I got good grades in math and geometry, this looked like I'd be able to get in. It also didn't hurt that my aunt, a very good seamstress and dressmaker, sewed several dresses specifically for the school's chief accountant, who was involved in enrollment decisions. So I got in.

What's interesting is that from the almost sixty students accepted into the program that year, all of them were female. It was the same for the class before us, and for the class after us. Later, after I started working the Soviet Union, and even in the United States in the early 1990s, I understood that this was a trend. I'd say that 70% of the programmers I encountered in the IT industry were female. The males were mostly in middle and upper management.

We started what would be considered our major concentration courses during the second year. Along with programming, there were a lot of related classes: "Computing Appliances and Their Organization", "Electro Technology", "Algorithms of Numerical Methods," and a lot of math that included integral and differential calculations. But programming was the main course, and we spent the most hours on it.

In the programming classes, we studied programming the “dry” way: using paper, pencil and eraser. In fact, this method was so important that students who forgot their pencils were sent to the main office to ask for one. It was extremely embarrassing, and we learned quickly not to forget them.

Every semester we would take a new programming language to learn. We learned Algol, Fortran, and PL/1. We would learn from simplest commands to loop organization, function and sub-function programming, multi-dimensional array processing, and more.

After mastering the basics, we would take exams, which were logical computing tasks to code in this specific language.

At some point midway through the program, our school bought the very first physical computer I ever saw : the Nairi. The programming language was AP, which was one of the few computer languages with Russian keywords.

Then, we started taking labs. It was terrifying experience. You had to type your program in entering device which basically was a typewriter connected to a huge computer. The programs looked like step-by-step instructions, and if you made even one mistake you had to start all over again. To code a solution for a linear algebraic equation usually would take 10 - 12 steps.

Our teacher used to go for one week of “practice work and curriculum development,” to a serious IT shop with more advanced machines every once in a while. At that time, the heavy computing power was in the ES Series, produced by Soviet bloc countries.

These machines were clones of the IBM 360. They worked with punch cards and punch tapes. She would bring back tons of papers with printed code and debugging comments for us to learn in classroom.

After two and half years of rigorous study using pencil and paper, we had six months of practice. Most of the time it was one of several scientific research institutes existed in Nizhny Novgorod. I went to an institute that was oriented towards the auto industry.

I graduate with title “Programmer-Technician”. Most of the girls from my class took computer operator jobs, but I did not want to settle. I continued my education at Lobachevsky State University, named after Lobachevsky, the famous Russian mathematician. Since I was taking evening classes, it took me six years to graduate.

I wrote a lot about my first college because now looking back I realize that this is where I really learned to code and developed my programming skills. At the State University, we took a huge amount of unnecessary courses. The only useful one was professional English. After this course I could read technical documentation in English without issues.

My final university degree was equivalent to a US master’s in Computer Science. The actual major was called “Computational Mathematics and Cybernetics”.



In total I worked for about seven years in the USSR as computer programmer, from 1982 to 1989. Technology changed rapidly, even there. I started out writing programs on special blanks for punch card machines using a Russian version of Assembler. To maximize performance, we would leave stacks of our punch cards for nightly processing.

After a couple years, we got terminals with keyboards. First they were installed in the same room where main computer was. Initially, there were not enough terminals and “machine time” was evenly divided between all of the programmers during the day.

Then, the terminals started to appear in the same room where programmers were. The displays were small, with black background and green font. We were now working in the terminal.

The languages were also changing. I switched to C and had to get hands-on training. I did not know then, but I picked profession where things are constantly moving. The most I’ve ever worked with the same software was for about three years.

In 1991, we emigrated to the States. I had to quit my job two years before to avoid any issues with the Soviet government. Every programmer I knew had to sign a special form commanding them to keep state secrets. Such a signature could prevent us from getting exit visas.

When I arrived in the US, I worried I had fallen behind. To refresh my skills and to become more marketable, I had to take programming course for six months. It was the then-popular mix of COBOL, DB2, JCL etc.

The main differences between USA and the USSR was the level at which computers were incorporated in every day life. In the USSR, they were still a novelty. There were not a lot of practical usage. Some of the reasons were planned organization of economy, politicized approach to science. Cybernetics was considered “capitalist” discovery and was in exile in 1950s. In the United States, computers were already widely in use, and even in consumer settings.

The other difference is gender of this profession. In the United States, it is more male-dominated. In Russia as I was starting my professional life, it was considered more of a female occupation. In both programs I studied, girls represented 100% of the class. Guys would go for something that was considered more masculine. These choices included majors like construction engineering and mechanical engineering.

Now, things have changed in Russia. Average salary for software developer in Moscow is around \$21K annually, versus \$10K average salary for Russia as a whole. It, like in the United States, has become a male-dominated field.

In conclusion, I have to say I picked the good profession to be in. Although I constantly have to learn new things, I’ve never had to worry about being employed. When I did go through a layoff, I was able to find a job very quickly. It is also a good paying job. I was very lucky compared to other immigrants, who had to study programming from scratch.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/feminism>

## Homosexuality in the USSR

The fact that homosexuality was criminally sanctioned under Soviet law is something that is often thrown in the face of communists in general, and used to “discredit” Comrade Stalin in particular. Indeed, “Stalin hated gays” is something I’ve seen posted online numerous times by trots and anarchists. I doubt Stalin ever wrote or spoke a single public word on the matter. In any event, such an accusation is by, its very nature, decontextualized and misleading. What needs to be stated is that Soviet legal and medical opinion on this question was no different than what was generally accepted in the world at large, namely, that homosexuality was a psycho-sexual disorder, a form of mental illness. Additionally, there were arguments made that attempted to tie homosexuality to fascism – especially considering that many of Hitler’s Brownshirts were homosexual.

Bad as this may seem, it needs to be seen in historical context. Science advances, knowledge grows and deepens. The science of human sexuality was in its infancy for all of Stalin’s life. Stalin died in 1953. He died before the ‘sexual revolution’, and he never heard of Alfred Kinsey, Masters and Johnson or the ‘Hite Report.’ In fact, it was only in 1975 that the American Psychological Association itself ceased to classify homosexuality as a mental disorder. To expect that Stalin, and Soviet Russia in the 1930s, would foresee the advances in medical and psychological science that would occur forty years in the future is either naïve or malicious. It should be noted, by comparison, that the GDR had a much more open and positive policy with respect to homosexuality. This can be explained by the fact that studies in sexology were more advanced in Germany than in any place else in the world. But this too has to be seen in historical context, as part not only of the deepening of scientific knowledge, but the spread of such knowledge throughout the society in general. By 1987, GDR law stated that “homosexuality, just like heterosexuality, represents a variant of sexual behavior. Homosexual people do therefore not stand outside socialist society, and the civil rights are warranted to them exactly as to all other citizens.”

So, here is the real answer. As Marxist-Leninists, we are scientists. As scientists we seek to advance human knowledge and understanding. And, as our knowledge and understanding grows, so does our ideology. Today, there is not a single communist worthy of the name who does not whole-heartedly support gay rights.

Moreover, I think it should also be pointed out that, despite the view that homosexuality was a mental disorder, the actual law in question, Article 121 of the Soviet Criminal Code, was pretty much only enforced in cases of pedophilia, with some 800 – 1000 prosecutions annually.

Wikipedia (everyone’s quick go-to) quotes the 1930 “Great Soviet Encyclopedia” as follows: Soviet legislation does not recognize so-called crimes against morality. Our laws proceed from the principle of protection of society and therefore countenance punishment only in those instances when juveniles and minors are the objects of homosexual interest ... while recognizing the incorrectness of homosexual development ... our society combines prophylactic and other therapeutic measures with all the necessary conditions for making the conflicts that afflict homosexuals as painless as possible and for resolving their typical estrangement from society

within the collective

—Sereisky, *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 1930, p. 593

Actually, Communists were MORE progressive on the question of gay rights than was the bourgeois society of the time. Once again, the important thing here is the level of scientific understanding and the extent to which that knowledge has been spread throughout society at large. Germany had the longest history of psychological and medical research on human sexuality. There was an Institute of Sexology as early as the 1920s. The Nazis closed it down when they came to power. Leading medical researchers at the Institute of Sexology were affiliated with the KPD. That's right, the KPD, the "STALINIST" German Communist Party. Many German Communists were not only supportive of gay rights, but were pioneers of sexual liberation. In fact, a number of them sang the health praises of nudism. This includes Markus Wolf's father and family. Markus Wolf would later become the head of foreign intelligence for the GDR; the man the CIA would call "the man without a face" because they didn't possess a photograph of him.

Furthermore, "Lenin decriminalized homosexuality" is a much beloved trotskyite trope that they love to throw at Marxist-Leninists. The facts, are a little different:

"The initiative for revocation of antihomosexual legislation, following the Revolution of February 1917, had come, not from the Bolsheviks but from the Cadets (Constitutional democrats) and the anarchists (Karlinsky, 1989). Nevertheless, once the old criminal code had been repealed after the October Revolution, the antihomosexual article also ceased to be valid. The Russian Federation criminal codes for 1922 and 1926 did not mention homosexuality, although the corresponding laws remained in force in places where homosexuality was most prevalent – in the Islamic republics of Azerbaijan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan, as well as in Christian Georgia."

"Soviet medical and legal experts were very proud of the progressive nature of their legislation. In 1930, the medical expert Sereisky (1930) wrote in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*: "Soviet legislation does not recognize so-called crimes against morality. Our laws proceed from the principle of protection of society and therefore countenance punishment only in those instances when juveniles and minors are the objects of homosexual interest" P. 593).

"As Engelstein (1995) justly mentions, the formal decriminalization of sodomy did not mean that such conduct was invulnerable to prosecution. The absence of formal statutes against anal intercourse or lesbianism did not stop the prosecution of homosexual behavior as a form of disorderly conduct. After the 1922 Penal Code was published there were in that same year at least two known trials for homosexual practices. The eminent psychiatrist Vladimir Bekhterev testified that "public demonstration of such impulses ... is socially harmful and cannot be permitted" (Engelstein, 1995, p. 167). The official stance of Soviet medicine and law in the 1920s, as reflected by Sereisky's encyclopedia article, was that homosexuality was a disease that was difficult, perhaps even impossible, to cure. So "while recognizing the incorrectness of homosexual development ... our society combines prophylactic and other therapeutic measures with all the necessary conditions for making the conflicts that afflict homosexuals as painless as

possible and for resolving their typical estrangement from society within the collective” (Sereisky, 1930, p. 593).”

“The precise number of persons prosecuted under Article 121 is unknown (the first official information was released only in 1988), but it is believed to be about 1000 a year. Since the late 1980s, according to official data, the number of men convicted under Article 121 has been steadily decreasing. In 1987, 831 men were sentenced (this figure refers to the entire Soviet Union); in 1989, 539; in 1990, 497; in 1991, 462; and for the first 6 months of 1992, 227, among whom all but 10 were sentenced under Article 121.2 (figures are for Russia only) (Gessen, 1994). According to Russian lawyers, most convictions have indeed been under Article 121.2, 80 percent of cases being related to the involvement of minors up to 18 years of age (Ignatov, 1974). In an analysis of 130 convictions under Article 121 between 1985 and 1992, it was found that 74 percent of the accused were convicted under 121.2, of whom 20 percent were for rape using physical force, 8 percent for using threats, 52 percent for having sexual contact with minors and 2 and 18 percent, respectively, for exploiting the victims dependent or vulnerable status (Dyachenko, 1995). ”

SOURCE: <http://www.gay.ru/english/history/kon/soviet.htm>

So, in conclusion: Lenin DID NOT specifically decriminalize homosexual activity. The Tsarist criminal code was declared null and void, the anti-homosexual statutes along with all the others. The 1922 and 1926 Soviet criminal codes did not mention homosexuality, but anti-homosexual laws remained on the books in the Islamic republics and Georgia. When homosexuality does re-enter the Soviet criminal code, prosecutions are relatively rare (1,000 per year out of a population of 200 million) and those that were prosecuted targeted instances of rape, child abuse, and abuse of dependent and vulnerable persons.

Those are the FACTS. Was the law perfect? Of course not! Was it a good law or something to be admired or replicated? No. Was the law abused and innocent people sanctioned? Likely, as in all legal systems. But, the intent and extent of the law was far different from what anti-Stalin and ‘left anti-communist’ propaganda would have one believe.

This entry was posted in [Uncategorized](#) on [April 8, 2015](#) by [Alfonso Casal](#).

<http://www.stalinsociety.org/2015/04/08/homosexuality-in-the-ussr/>

## Arts and culture

- [Aristocrat of Soviet cinema Vasily Lanovoi](#):

Although Vasily Lanovoi was born in Moscow on January 16, 1934, his parents were simple laborers “from the plow.” Fleeing from hunger, they moved to the capital of the USSR from the village near Odessa. When he was 7 years old, his father and mother sent Vasily to grandparents. Have decided as follows: let him spend the summer in the village, and help the elderly. They couldn’t even think their son to get into the German occupation – as much as three and a half years. Once one of the Germans gave Lanovoy his smart belt. The boy without hesitation put it

on and went for a walk. But another soldier gunner ordered the boy to return the unearned gift. Lanovoi refused. Then the raging fascist let machine gun all over the child's head. "I returned the belt with a trembling hand, and then stuttered for year from the shock", – says the actor. But the actor is grateful to be alive.

Higher forces kept the boy in Moscow, in the difficult postwar years. The father and mother after the rear work with chemicals have become disabled, and ruined. The starving capital was dominated by hooliganism and banditry. Did not remain aloof young Vasily Lanovoi. For example, together with his friends climbed into food trucks and stole products. Police have arrested many of his friends. Nearly all perished in the prisons. And Vasily Lanovoi was lucky again ...

After leaving the walls of the school with a gold medal, Vasily could not decide whom to become. On the one hand, in his youth dreamed of a career of a pilot. On the other hand, he wanted to get a prestigious education, becoming, for example, a journalist. Finally, Lanovoi chose theater. The love to the scene was instilled by a famous Soviet director Sergei Stein. In his amateur drama studio Lanovoi mastered the basics of the profession. In company with him were not less promising future actors – Valery Nosik, the star of the Moscow Satire Theater Vera Vasilyeva and prima operetta Tatiana Shmyga.

Still not being able to make a difficult choice, the young Vasily Lanovoi filed documents to flight school, and journalism at Moscow State University. – After a month and a half from I left the university... – Well, from "aviation"... had to say goodbye to the sky, thanks to Stein. Vasily Lanovoi entered the Shchukin Theater School Lanovoi without questions asked. Tall, broad-shouldered, a noble person ... The ideal image of a man with light communist future!

For the first time in the country's movie screens Lanovoi appeared in 1954, as a Valentine Listovsky, handsome egoist of the "Certificate of Education". The production was awarded the Grand Prix at the All-Union competition of amateur, and Vasily, as a key figure, handsome, received five hundred rubles as prize money. But the really famous actor became after the film "Pavel Korchagin".

By the time of the shooting of the Soviet epoch-making film "Officers" (1971) behind Lanovoi were blockbusters such as "War and Peace", "Anna Karenina and" Scarlet Sails". Lanovoi played

Red Guard Ivan Varavva so enthusiastically that in 1971 he was recognized as the best actor of Soviet cinema. By the way, all the tricks in the frame Lanovoi carried himself – catching up with a freight train with flowers in his hands, ran across the rooftops of wagons, and rode a horse. And once he acted as a hero outside the frame – saved Alina Pokrovskaya, when her horse suddenly rushed to the precipice. Of the entire crew only Lanovoi did not lose control: he caught the mare and stopped it at the edge of a precipice.

His secret to success Lanovoi once put simply: "I always knew that I not only play a role, but set an example for the young! How one should love, be friends, and live!"

Aristocrat of Soviet cinema Vasily Lanovoi was appreciated by both the audience and critics, and also officials. In 1972, the Young Communist League presented him with a special award – “For the creation of heroic imagery.”

On the screen, everything breathes passion – but in real life were nothing but regret for the lost happiness ... Lanovoi and Samoilova in “Anna Karenina” movie. 1967

Lanovoy managed almost impossible: in the USSR, where the word “sex” was forbidden everywhere and for all, he was recognized as the first sex symbol of Soviet cinema. And not just critics, but by the people themselves, especially women. On his insane popularity among the ladies Lanovoi knew, but always stressed with humor: “I am not a womanizer”. As a true romantic hero, he could love only one woman.

First wife of Lanovoi became his classmate Tatiana Samoilova. Tatiana learned about Vasily interesting facts. That he lives in one room with sick parents and two sisters, very simple man, almost rustic. First, experienced sympathy, then respect, and after – love.

In 1955, the couple married. Alas, the marriage was doomed almost from the beginning. Affected all – material disorder, permanent trips, and finally, abortion (it was twins)...

Vasily was against, but I insisted on the surgery – not once regretted Tatyana. – was afraid of misery! About this mistake I regret all my life ... Lanovoi and Samoilova divorced when both were only 24. After 8 years fate brought them together again-on the set of “Anna Karenina.” For roles, both visibly lost weight, from what have become even more attractive. For a while, the actors, and most viewers were hoping love awaken in them. Alas, it did not come true ...

The second wife of Vasily Lanovoi became Tamara Zyablova – TV stage director and actress, who was 5 years older. Immediately after the wedding, the newlyweds went to Crimea to work on the film “Scarlet Sails”. The film crew found a ship, bought fabric, sewed the sails and sailed from Sevastopol to Koktebel. Knowing that in Yalta was his newly made bride, Lanovoi, to her surprise, invited her to the dock at the appointed hour and ... sailed under red sails!

Happiness of the actors was short-lived: in 1971 Zyablova died in a car accident while being pregnant. After the double loss the actor became indifferent to everything, except work.

This family happiness and the joy of fatherhood to Vasily gave his third wife – actress Irina Kupchenko. Their union surprisingly coincided everything: material well-being, a rich experience of life, readiness of both to sacrifice family for career. The age difference was beneficial – he was 37, she was 23.

The couple had two sons – Alexander and Sergei. To the great relief of their parents, both sons were indifferent to the profession of actors. The first graduated from the history department of Moscow State University, and the second – economic. From birth, children of Vasily and Irina were different: older – calm and rational, but younger – frivolous and hopping: often ran away from home, dabbled in drugs and alcohol. Not once Lanovoi Jr. became a defendant in the criminal chronicle.

Sergey has left this world suddenly – 9 October 2013 at the age of 37 years. His body was found in St. Petersburg, in the apartment of his civil wife. The cause of death was sudden cardiac arrest. The memory of his son continues in his daughter and granddaughter of Vasily Lanovoi and Irina Kupchenko – Anna.

In the era of perestroika Lanovoi virtually disappeared from the screens. Aristocrat of Soviet cinema Vasily Lanovoi did not want to act in offered vulgar TV shows and crime films, as he was raised on high ideals of Soviet cinema and born for the great roles!

Recovery from depression creative actor found in teaching. In his native Shchukin School has gone from the lecturer to the head of the Department of scenic speech.

In the late nineties in the creative biography of the actor once again came a streak of light. He successfully participated in performances of “Dear Liar”, “The Lion in Winter” and “Dedication to Eve”. In 2013, the actor appeared again on the big screen – in the image of Cardinal Richelieu of the adventure series “The Three Musketeers”. This work greatly enriched the arsenal of Lanovoi. In the past, Aristocrat of Soviet cinema Vasily Lanovoi didn’t often play the cynical fans of vile intrigues.

- [The diversity of the universal: Stalin on the dialectic of a totalising proletarian culture:](#)

Fredric Jameson used to argue for what may be called a dialectic of totalisation. In some cases, a universal master narrative actually fosters a diversity of voices, which in some way gain the possibility to speak. Jameson was countering the postmodern ban on master narratives, but I am interested in another dimension of this dialectic, which relates to Stalin. I am working on a detailed argument concerning Stalin and anti-colonialism, as a development from his extensive formulations of the ‘national question’ in the USSR. In the midst of my study, I came across this intriguing observation, in response to Kautsky’s argument for a universal proletarian language:

Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little-known nationalities. Who could have imagined that the old, tsarist Russia consisted of not less than fifty nations and national groups? The October Revolution, however, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on to the scene, gave them new life and a new development (Works volume 7, p. 141).

He goes on to weaken his insight a little, suggesting some mutual benefit between proletarian culture and local cultures. But he tries to get across the point that the process is dialectical, with each side, or, rather, many sides engaging in the process. More to the point, some forms of the universal, in this case the proletarian universal, actually enable diversity rather than stifling it. Of course, if you no longer buy into the universal in question and opt for another, such as when an enemy appears on the doorstep, then you fall outside the process.

- [Cultural revolution as the pentecost of languages and peoples:](#)



We are perhaps most used to the Cultural Revolution in relation to China – the extraordinary decade of revolutionary upheaval that is still to be fully assessed for its drawbacks and benefits. However, the term ‘cultural revolution’ actually goes back to Lenin and Stalin, where it has a distinct meaning. For Stalin, cultural revolution is a Leninist slogan which designates raising the cultural level of workers and peasants:

Therefore, the cultural development of the working class and of the masses of the working peasantry, not only the development of literacy, although literacy is the basis of all culture, but primarily the cultivation of the ability to take part in the administration of the country, is the chief lever for improving the state and every other apparatus. This is the sense and significance of Lenin’s slogan about the cultural revolution (Works, vol. 10, pp. 330-31).

This approach to cultural revolution took on a whole new dimension when it became part of the affirmative action program of the USSR – or what was called the ‘national question’. In this case, cultural revolution meant raising and transformation the cultures of the many minorities in the USSR. Often this involved creating literate cultures where none existed before. Scripts were created, grammars written, people taught for the first time to read and write their own language, literature written, and a new intellectual and political leadership fostered. The affirmative action program also included strict punishments for racist statements and acts for scattered minorities – which included the Jews.

All of this was predicated on the core socialist idea that the party and then the government should foster rather than repress different languages and cultures. Indeed, the ‘national question’ was in many ways structured and determined by the issue of language.

Let me put it in terms of the biblical stories of Babel and Pentecost (Genesis 11 and Acts). For Babel, linguistic unity is desired and multiplicity a seeming curse; for Pentecost unity is the source of unexpected diversity.

Or in a little more detail: in Genesis, we find that initially ‘the whole earth had one language and the same words’ (Gen 11:1). Soon enough, the human effort to build a city with a tower into the heavens makes God realise the immense potential of human power. In response, God confuses human language and scatters people over the face of the earth (confusion and scattering are repeated time and again through the story, as though providing formal confirmation of the content). The account of Pentecost in Acts 2 may seem to provide a long-range resolution of this confusion of tongues. Here, the multiplicity of tongues, ‘as of fire’, appearing on the heads of the apostles, enables a united understanding of the new gospel of Christ. Multiplicity is therefore a way of understanding the same message, which may be spoken in many tongues. However, Acts has a dialectical kick: the unitary drive of the Holy Spirit, like the rush of a mighty wind, produces diversity. The result is ‘differentiated tongues’, ‘other languages’, people from ‘every nation under heaven’ hearing the apostles speak in their ‘native language’ – Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs (the care with the list manifests less comprehensiveness than sheer diversity).

With this outline of the main tensions between Genesis 11 and Acts 2 in mind, it becomes possible to map different language policies and proposals (and indeed discover some surprising alliances). One cluster of such policies may be described as Babelian, or rather pre-Babelian. The desire is for one language, which existed before the divinely instigated confusion of tongues and scattering of peoples. Such a desire is predicated on the assumption that multiple languages are signs of the Fall, with Genesis 11 understood as yet another Fall story, or at least another facet of the story of the Fall that begins in Genesis 3. Far better is a universal language that would overcome the strife and discord of many tongues. Those who have pursued variations on this approach make for some strange occupiers of the same bed: Walter Benjamin's search for the perfect, Adamic language that does not seek to communicate; the proponents of Esperanto; tsarist policy makers afraid of native languages and their connections with separatism; the Nazi refusal to acknowledge minority languages in Germany and Austria – such as the Sorbians and Slovene Carinthians; and indeed 'assimilation' policies around the globe even today, in which immigrants are supposed to meld into the national culture through language.

So what is Stalin's position? It is clearly a Pentecostal one. The socialist affirmative action program actually produced more languages:

Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little-known nationalities (Works, vol. 10, p. 141).

Indeed, it led to the creation of new 'regenerated nations', that is, 'new, socialist nations, which have arisen on the ruins of the old nations and are led by the internationalist party of the labouring masses' (Works, vol. 11, p. 369).

This is nothing less than a Pentecost of languages and peoples. Socialists are clearly Pentecostals, in favour of multiplicity and diversity.

But how did these languages, cultures and peoples achieve such a regenerated state? Through a cultural revolution:

In view of this, the Party considered it necessary to help the regenerated nations of our country to rise to their feet and attain their full stature, to revive and develop their national cultures, widely to develop schools, theatres and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages (Works, vol. 11, p. 369).

Or in more detail, for anyone who is serious about cultural revolution:

What is needed is to cover the country with an extensive network of schools functioning in the native languages, and to supply them with staffs of teachers who know the native languages.

What is needed is to nationalise—that is, to staff with members of the given nation—all the administrative apparatus, from Party and trade-union to state and economic.

What is needed is widely to develop the press, the theatre, the cinema and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages.

Why in the native languages?—it may be asked. Because only in their native, national languages can the vast masses of the people be successful in cultural, political and economic development (Works, vol 11, p. 370).

Cultural revolution is therefore the Pentecost of languages and peoples. The result is that the message may be heard in ‘differentiated tongues’, ‘other languages’, with people from ‘every nation under heaven’ hearing the message in their ‘native language’. As for how many languages Stalin knew, that is still a matter of debate.

- Vladimir Khutarev, [Mystical emblem: The secrets of the hammer and sickle](#), 2014:

The hammer and sickle on the coat of arms of the USSR is one of the most recognized symbols of Soviet power. The history of its origin is full of secrets and mysteries. Freemasonry, Hinduism, and ancient Aryan and Slavic mythology are all found in the two crossed implements on the Soviet emblem.

The hammer and sickle that decorated the coat of arms of the USSR is probably the most recognizable symbol both of Soviet power and of the ideology of the state it represented, as well as the entire history of the country.

The origin of the Soviet coat of arms is ambiguous. Several variants were initially worked out: a hammer and sickle, a hammer and rakes, a hammer and pitchforks, and a hammer and plow. The hammer was chosen for its traditional association with workers in European countries.

Together with an agricultural tool, it was supposed to illustrate Lenin’s famous slogan about the unity of the proletariat and peasants.

In April 1918 the final version of the emblem was approved – a design by the Moscow artist Yevgeny Kamzolkin. In summer 1918 the Fifth Session of Soviets officially adopted the symbol.

It is interesting to note that Kamzolkin was not even a communist and, furthermore, he was a deeply religious man from a wealthy family. The artist was a member of the mystical artistic Society of Leonardo da Vinci for more than 10 years and perfectly understood the meaning of the symbols.

First of all, the hammer and sickle are associated with the Masonic symbol of the hammer and chisel. These items signified a clearly defined goal (chisel) and its firm manifestation (hammer). In European religious symbology, the hammer is associated with aggressive male force, physical (the hammer of the blacksmith Hephaestus in Greece) as well as deadly.

The thunder gods Svarog (Slavic) and Thor (Norse) wielded it in their hands. In China and India it is the symbol of the destructive triumph of the forces of evil.

It is now difficult to say what meanings Kamzolkin insinuated into his drawing. Was he solely carrying out the order to create an image for the alliance of peasants and workers, or did he infuse into this symbol his attitude towards revolutionary power, choosing symbols for death, war, and the triumph of evil?

The Russian philosopher Alexei Losev gave the following assessment of the crest: “It is a symbol that propels the masses and is not merely a symbol but is a constructive-technical principle for human actions and volitions ... Here we see the symbol of the unity of the workers and peasants, the symbol of the Soviet state.”

The historian and academician Yuri Gauthier wrote in 1921 in his diary: “A sharpness has pervaded Moscow for several days: How will it end? The answer will be in the words “hammer, sickle” read in reverse!” The fact is that it sounds like “with a throne” [put together and inversed, the words for hammer (molot) and sickle (serp) create the word prestolom, meaning literally “with a throne”] – this is how Muscovites hinted at the dictatorial methods of the Bolsheviks.

In various religions, the sickle is interpreted as a symbol of death. In Christianity, the sheaves and the harvest are equated with the human souls that the Harvester, i.e. the Lord, will gather after the end of the world. It is interesting to note that during the Middle Ages death was depicted not with a scythe but specifically with a sickle.

The pagan pantheons of various Indo-European and Slavic peoples feature a goddess called Mara or Morana, who traditionally held a sickle in her left hand. In Hinduism the goddess of death Kali, sister of Shiva, holds a sickle in her left hand.

Curiously, the eagle on the coat of arms of revolutionary Austria also holds a sickle in its left claw and the sickle is likewise placed on that side on the Soviet crest.

The name “Hammer and Sickle” has been given to numerous settlements, villages, and railway platforms on the territory of modern Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan .

One of the largest steelmaking and metallurgical factories in Moscow, which had belonged to the French merchant Jules Goujon prior to the revolution, was renamed the Hammer and Sickle plant.

There even used to be a special golden medal called the Hammer and Sickle, which was developed by Stalin’s personal architect and designer, Miron Merzhanov. The medal was awarded to heroes of socialist labor and knights of the Order of Lenin and was considered the highest medal in the USSR. It was awarded to a total of 19,000 people.

- [Bringing tribute to the gods of the Soviet Union](#), 2014 (anti-communist but has some interesting content):

Lenin and Stalin were myths, invincible supermen in whose honor songs and poems were composed, films made, and gifts sent from all over the world. Many of these items are now on

show for the very first time at an exhibition called “The Myth of the Beloved Leader”, which recently opened at the State Historical Museum on Red Square.

The exhibition has gathered exhibits that have been lying in warehouses for more than 20 years, and many of them had never been exhibited in Russia before. They were shown in Sweden, in Germany, in other countries, but not in Russia. The question is – why?

“There were certain standards for the leaders’ images. Works that did not meet these were rejected at the highest level,” says Lyubov Lushina, historian and one of the creators of the exhibition. “Stalin, for example, had always been depicted with a direct gaze, exuding confidence and peace of mind.” The actual appearance of Stalin – small in stature, with traces of smallpox on his face – did not inspire due reverence.

The real biographies of the leaders were not as heroic as they would have like them to be. That is why many of these items were never displayed in public. The cards with numbers and children’s drawings that Lenin’s wife Krupskaya used to teach him anew to read and count after a stroke... Stalin’s picture of a girl feeding a lamb with a bottle of milk, which he cut out of his favorite magazine *Ogonyok*... these did not fit the carefully cultivated image of heroism. People were to treat these leaders as icons, avatars of a new religion that the Soviet authorities had invented.

The Bolsheviks fought fiercely against the Orthodox faith, seeing in it a competitor. They demolished churches and repressed priests. However, the “holy place is never empty” – as icons and the cross had been outlawed, they had to come up with something new – with Soviet symbols. The five-pointed red star became the new “cross”, while the new “icons” were Lenin and Stalin.

Church Saints were portrayed with a book: A closed book meant sacrament, while an open one meant the path of truth. A poster dedicated to the 70th anniversary of Stalin’s birth portrays him with an open book in his left hand, as Stalin is “the torch of communism”. In this there is a striking similarity to the representation of saints on icons. And among the gifts presented to Stalin there is even a triptych (a portable iconostasis), featuring the six “ages” of the leader.

In the Soviet religion, Lenin was assigned the role of a saint: He was ascribed immortality (“Lenin will live forever”, read a popular slogan), and his remains, stored in the mausoleum on Red Square, were supposed to be imperishable (they were supported by an entire laboratory). Like the saints, Lenin (unlike Stalin) was never portrayed laughing. It was probably for this reason that it was forbidden to show the wooden bust of Lenin depicting him laughing, which can also be seen at the exhibition.

Lenin was sent gifts from all over the world, from Japan (a wooden bust of Lenin with prominent cheekbones and narrow eyes in which he is indistinguishable from a Japanese man), from Madagascar (black, with Negroid features), and from Clare Sheridan, the niece of Winston Churchill, who made a bust of the Soviet leader herself. This bust was also banned from public display – Lenin was “too natural”.

There is also the Chukchi legend of the hero Lenin, carved on a walrus tusk, as well as portraits of him made of thousands of grains, of bird feathers, foal wool, poplar fluff, wire, amber, sugar and beads. A prisoner, serving time for forgery, created a portrait composed of texts of Lenin's quotes. Even a forger respected Lenin. Or maybe there was another reason – he might have been released earlier for such an ideological act.

Stalin received so many gifts that in 1949, on the 70th anniversary of his birth, they were exhibited in three museums. The show featured presents from Italy, France, Germany, and Argentina. There were gorgeous silkscreens sent by Mao (Stalin hung them in the hall of his summer cottage), a leather briefcase made from an entire Brazilian crocodile, and a collection of vintage pipes.

By the way, Stalin's pipe is also a myth. "In his private life, Stalin smoked cigarettes," says Lushina. "He used the pipe to make the painful pauses during negotiations and meetings. In addition, he looked more imposing with it."

Stalin himself did not attend the exhibition of his presents – the real Stalin could hardly make an advantageous impression against the background of the fictional Stalin, whose portraits hung on all the walls. However, he encouraged this ideologically adjusted lie about himself.

Once, attending an exhibition dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the Red Army, Stalin stopped in front of a picture in which he was depicted inspecting a cavalry parade in 1919. "Who, if not Stalin, could better know that he was not present at that review," says Lyubov Lushina. "But, seeing the picture, he smiled and returned to it again and again during the visit."

"The genius of Lenin will be demanded more than once" and "The current inhabitants of the Kremlin are nothing compared to the great Lenin and Stalin" – many of the comments written by visitors in the guest book at the exhibition demonstrate that even today the myths retain their potency and continue to attract a variety of people.

"We, the new generation of Marxists and Leninists, are grateful to the museum. Your efforts inspire us to continue to perform the covenants of Lenin. Though there are few of us, we have fervent hearts, and our minds crave knowledge," write some young communists. Thus, Lenin himself was also present at the display. Lenin's lookalike dropped in after work. He poses for tourists nearby, on Red Square.

- [Visual Arts of the USSR: Aviation](#), 2017.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/fq/artsculture>

## Soviet Union and the Great Depression

From a post by [Roland Boer](#):

Accounts of the Great Depression (1929 to the late 1930s) usually use terms such as 'worldwide' and 'global'. Trade declined by 50%, heavy industry came to a virtual standstill, unemployment

went as high as 33% and so on. Obviously, for such accounts the USSR was not part of the ‘world’ and ‘globe’ at the time. The first and second five-year plans had an extraordinary effect, industrialising a ‘backward’ economy in a way that makes every other industrial revolution pale by comparison. Agriculture was mechanised and collectivised, and output, employment, and standard of living grew by staggering proportions. While many at the time prophesied the imminent economic collapse of the Soviet Union – ‘mediaeval fossils to whom facts mean nothing’ (Stalin) – others were willing to give honour where honour was due. For example, the English capitalist, Gibson Jarvie, president of the United Dominion Trust, wrote in 1932:

Now I want it clearly understood that I am neither Communist nor Bolshevik, I am definitely a capitalist and an individualist .... Russia is forging ahead while all too many of our factories and shipyards lie idle and approximately 3,000,000 of our people despairingly seek work. Jokes have been made about the five-year plan, and its failure has been predicted. You can take it as beyond question, that under the five-year plan much more has been accomplished than was ever really anticipated. ... In all these industrial towns which I visited, a new city is growing up, a city on a definite plan with wide streets in the process of being beautified by trees and grass plots, houses of the most modern type, schools, hospitals, workers’ clubs and the inevitable crèche or nursery, where the children of working mothers are cared for. ... Don’t underrate the Russians or their plans and don’t make the mistake of believing that the Soviet Government must crash. ... Russia today is a country with a soul and an ideal. Russia is a country of amazing activity. I believe that the Russian objective is sound. ... And perhaps most important of all, all these youngsters and these workers in Russia have one thing which is too sadly lacking in the capitalist countries today, and that is—hope!

Talk about unleashing the forces of production! Obviously, the USSR did not experience the Great Depression. All of which leads me to ponder whether there was not a connection between that Depression and the huge and disruptive processes underway in the Soviet Union. Such a massive shift in a place like the USSR was bound to have an effect globally.

Also see [another post by him](#):

As I work through the material concerning the industrialisation and collectivisation drives of the 1930s (actually starting in the late 1920s), it is becoming clearer that it this period and its enormous upheavals were crucial for Stalin’s rethinking of Marxist theories of human nature. During those intense periods of extraordinary reconstruction – literally unleashing the forces of production in a way not seen before (no ‘Great Depression’ in the USSR) – there were many who were wildly enthusiastic about the process. This was the time of the ‘foi furieuse’, of Stakhanovism, of mass enthusiasm and emulation. But there were also many losers, since it was a profoundly disruptive time. Many lagged, were doubtful and came actively to oppose the process. This is when what I would like to call a ‘materialist doctrine of evil’ really comes into its own. Ultimately, Stalin would come to see that such evil was deeply internal, within the collective drive, within the party and within each person (himself included). On the way to seeing this stark reality, he can certainly call up word-pictures like the following:

People look for the class enemy outside the collective farms; they look for persons with ferocious visages, with enormous teeth and thick necks, and with sawn-off shotguns in their



hands. They look for kulaks like those depicted on our posters. But such kulaks have long ceased to exist on the surface. The present-day kulaks and kulak agents, the present-day anti-Soviet elements in the countryside are in the main “quiet,” “smooth-spoken,” almost “saintly” people. There is no need to look for them far from the collective farms; they are inside the collective farms, occupying posts as storekeepers, managers, accountants, secretaries, etc. (1933, Works, volume 13, p. 235).

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/greatdepression>

## Jewish Autonomous Region in USSR

What is below comes from website assembled by Swarthmore College in 2001, which has been [put in PDF form](#). It is inherently anti-communist, as it ends up praising perestroika and condemning Stalin, but still has good information nonetheless. Other information on this is at the end of this page. Also see the page about [affirmative action](#) in the USSR.

Introduction

From [here](#). [1]

In 1934 the Soviet Government established the Jewish Autonomous Region, popularly known as Birobidzhan, in a sparsely populated area some five thousand miles east of Moscow. Designated as the national homeland of Soviet Jewry, Birobidzhan was part of the Kremlin's effort to create an alternative to Palestine. The Jewish Autonomous Region still exists today. Drawing on photograph collections never seen outside Birobidzhan, this exhibit explores both the Kremlin's efforts to create a socialist Jewish homeland and reasons for the failure of the Birobidzhan experiment. The story of the Soviet Zion sheds light on a host of important historical and contemporary issues regarding Jewish identity, community, and culture.

In a remote region

Via [panel 2](#)

In a remote region in the Russian Far East, there is a Jewish enclave that has existed for over sixty years. This is the story of the region's pioneers, a group with little experience in agricultural development but with a great dream of building a socialist Jewish homeland...[map of Jewish Autonomous Region in 1934, then says:] The territory highlighted here was designated the Jewish Autonomous Region in 1934. Birobidzhan, formerly Tikhonka, is the capital city of the Jewish Autonomous Region. The Region is popularly known as Birobidzhan.

What is a nation?

Via [panel 3](#)

... A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." Among the Jews there is no large and stable stratum connected with the land, which would naturally rivet the nation together."

Joseph Stalin, 1913

Living out a meager existence

Via [panel 4](#)

Most Jews living in Tsarist Russia eked out a meager existence, and were required to reside within the empire's western and southwestern provinces, an area known as the Pale of Settlement. They were denied the right to own land. After the 1917 Bolshevik seizure of power, most of the 2.5 million Jews living in Russia resided in small towns and cities within the Pale of Settlement, and made their livings from petty trade, small-scale handicraft production, and unskilled labor. Jews were hard hit by the collapse of the economy due to the combined impact of world war, revolution, civil war, and pogroms (acts of anti-Jewish violence) between 1914 and 1921.

Propaganda poster

Via [Panel 5](#)

This Soviet propaganda poster asserts that the kheder, the one-room Jewish primary school, produces a slavish attitude and leads to shopkeeping, the prayerhouse, and enmity among peoples. In contrast, the Soviet school prepares healthy people, capable of building the socialist order in which agricultural labor, factory work, and brotherhood among peoples are primary objectives.

Communist officials in 1920s

Via [Panel 6](#)

In the 1920s Communist officials hoped to refashion the occupational profile of Jews by transforming them into farmers. The government wanted this experiment in social engineering to weaken popular anti-Semitism and to promote the integration of Jews into the emerging socialist society. The Kremlin promoted Jewish agricultural colonization in Crimea, Ukraine, and Belarus. By 1930, 46,560 Jewish families, or approximately 231,000 people, lived in such colonies throughout the Soviet Union.

Soviet policy toward national minorities

Via [Panel 7](#)

"It is completely natural that the Jewish population ... strives to find its place in the Soviet Union.... The Jewish people face the great task of preserving its own nationality, and to this end a large part of the Jewish population must be transformed into an economically stable, agriculturally compact group which should number at least hundreds of thousands."

Mikhail Kalnin, president of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, addressing a 1926 conference on Jewish agricultural settlement

A region designed

Via [Panel 8](#)

The region known as Birobidzhan was designed as the official territory for Jewish land colonization. The mostly marshy territory, approximately twice the size of New Jersey, had been annexed by Russia in 1858. Summers are hot and rainy, winters cold and dry. Some 27,000 Russians, Cossacks, Koreans, and Ukrainians were already living in the region when Jewish settlement began.

The Kremlin selected this particular territory for the following reasons:

- To redirect the movement of Jews to the land away from Ukraine, Belarus and Crimea where the native populaces resisted Jewish settlement.
- To buffer the Soviet Union from Chinese and Japanese expansionism.
- To tap natural resources, such as fish, timber, iron, tin, graphite and gold.

Came as peasants

Via [Panel 9](#)

[below photo shows] A Jewish family works outside their home in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Their underground home, known as a zemlianka, was a mud hut with sod and thatch built over a hole in the ground. In the early days of settlement, Jewish migrants frequently slept out-of-doors until tents arrived and barracks were erected. [photo shows] Jews from Minsk interested in moving to Birobidzhan apply at a KOMZET (Committee for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land) office, circa 1928. KOMZET was the government organization in charge of recruiting and supervising the agriculture settlement of Jews. [Photo shows] Jewish settlers arrive at the train station in Tikhonka, a small village along the route of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Chief point of disembarkation for people moving to the region, Tikhonka grew rapidly after 1928 and was renamed Birobidzhan several years later.

Birobidzhan and Palestine

Via [Panel 10](#)

Published in both Yiddish (1929) and Russian (1930), Birobidzhan and Palestine by I. Sudarskii underscored the Soviet Government's conviction that the newly selected territory in the Soviet

Far East was a viable alternative to Palestine. The Kremlin hoped to score propaganda points in the international arena by establishing the first Jewish homeland in the modern era.

OZET

Via [Panel 11](#)

OZET (Society for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land) commissioned posters to advertise its lotteries to raise funds for Jewish agricultural settlement throughout the Soviet Union, though primary emphasis was placed on the J.A.R. by 1930. The posters were designed by Mikhail Dlugach (1893-1988), a well-known and respected member of the Soviet artistic community.

Posters

Via [Panel 12](#), description of posters for OZET.

Harsh realities

Via [Panel 13](#)

The harsh realities of life in Birobidzhan in the early years of colonization contrasted starkly with the promises and public pronouncements of the government, which did not provide the settlers with decent housing, food, medical care, and working conditions. In many instances, Jewish agricultural colonists found they were given land unsuitable for cultivation because it had not been surveyed and drained. In other cases, the fledgling collective and state farms lacked basic necessities such as potable water, barns, livestock, tools, and equipment.

"Thirty-two resettlers set a tent in the taiga, 12 km. from the station Tikhonka. Thus started the establishment of Waldheim. People unbearably suffered from mosquitoes...but we knew, the future is ahead. And we decided, not a step back!"

L. Gefen, director of Waldheim, a Jewish collective farm, circa 1928

"The colonization of Birobidzhan was begun and executed without preparation, planning and study."

Unknown author.

Autonomous status

Via [Panel 14](#)

The Kremlin granted autonomous administrative status to the Birobidzhan region in 1934, when it was designated the Jewish Autonomous Region. The decision signaled the government's official recognition of the area as the national territory of Soviet Jewry. Supporters of the Soviet

Union hailed the formation of the J.A.R. as a sign of the freedom and rights enjoyed by Jews under communism.

Publicity campaign

Via [Panel 15](#)

The Kremlin spearheaded a publicity campaign designed not only to publicize the Birobidzhan experiment, but also to raise funds and to encourage migration to the region. OZET (Society for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land) dubbed an airplane the "Birobidzhanets" and had it traverse Belarus and Ukraine as part of a publicity stunt to raise funds. During its two-week trip in 1933, the "Birobidzhanets" covered some five thousand kilometers, distributing pamphlets and other propaganda.

Grew by leaps and bounds

Via [Panel 16](#)

The Jewish autonomous region grew by leaps and bounds during the 1930s. By 1939 nearly 109,000 people lived in the region, though only 18,000 of them were Jews. The city of Birobidzhan boasted 30,000 residents by the end of the decade.

Banner

Via [Panel 17](#)

This banner (front and back shown) [shown above] was a gift from the workers of Kharkiv (Ukraine) to the Jewish Autonomous Region in 1935 on the first anniversary of the region's existence as an autonomous region. The banner presents a quote by Stalin in both Yiddish and Ukrainian: "Be true to the cause of proletarian internationalism, to the cause of fraternal unity and the proletarians of all countries."

Building socialism

Via [Panel 18](#)

From the late 1920s until the mid-1930s, over a thousand foreign Jews moved to the Jewish Autonomous Region. Starting in 1935, all foreigners wishing to settle in the Jewish Autonomous Region had to pay \$200 to KOMZET (Committee for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land), which covered all expenses while they traveled in the Soviet Union. Many of these Jews had family roots in Russia and were disenchanted with life in Europe and the Americas. They came especially from Lithuania, Argentina, and the United States. Like many Zionist pioneers in Palestine, the foreign Jews who settled in the Jewish Autonomous Region were attracted by the mystique of tilling the land, engaging in physical labor, and building socialism.

## The Birobidzhan Project

Via [Panel 19](#)

The Birobidzhan Project was well known among world Jewry. Supporters of the Jewish Autonomous Region organized committees to publicize awareness of the region and to raise funds. ICOR (the Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union), the most significant organization, accomplished the following:

- Enlisted some 100 local committees and over 10,000 dues-paying members by the early 1930s in the United States
- Raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the purchase of tools and equipment for the fledgling collective farms and factories of the Jewish Autonomous Region
- Allocated funds for cultural and health endeavors, including equipment for publishing newspapers and for medical care
- Organized active chapters in Europe and South America

## ICOR and the region

Via [Panel 20](#):

"We, a group of Chicago Jewish artists, in presenting our works to the builders of Biro-Bidjan are symbolizing with this action the flowering of a new social concept wherein the artist becomes moulded into the clay of the whole people and becomes the clarion of their hopes and desires....Thus we will better translate in our media these aspirations for a new and better life...to a more understanding world, from our fountain of creation the first sparkling glimpses that are the new Jew in the making." - Statement issued by Chicago artists, 1937

In 1935, ICOR (Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union) encouraged a group of American artists to donate over 200 works of art to the people of the Jewish Autonomous Region. The gift included paintings, drawings and sculptures which were first exhibited in New York and Boston and sent to Moscow in late 1936. However, the collection never found its way to the Jewish Autonomous Region. and the fate of these works of art is unknown. Two years later, a group of Jewish artists from Chicago celebrated the Jewish Autonomous Region by issuing this portfolio of 14 lithographs.

## A story

Via [Panel 21](#)

In 1931 Morris and Rose Becker moved from California to the ICOR Commune in Birobidzhan. Morris and Rose fervently believed in socialism and Zionism and pinned their hopes on the Soviet Zion. After several years of living in the commune, the Beckers became disillusioned with the Birobidzhan experiment. They felt that moving their family to the Soviet Union was a mistake. Rose died of sunstroke in 1936. Within a year, Morris died of pneumonia while preparing to bring the children back to America. Their children, Mitchell and Elizabeth,

remained in the Soviet Union after their parents' deaths. Mitchell was reported missing in action in World War II. Elizabeth currently lives in Komsomolsk-na-Amure, Russia. She has childhood recollections of the orange groves in California.

Yiddish used

Via [Panel 22](#)

Yiddish was used by the Soviet's government to foster the region's specifically Jewish nature. Hebrew, as the religious language of the Jews, was rejected. The region established Yiddish schools, newspapers, and cultural institutions. The regional government also printed street signs, railway station signs, and postmarks in both Yiddish and Russian. The teaching of Yiddish was obligatory in schools. In 1935 the government decreed that all government documents, including public notices, announcements, posters, and advertisements had to appear in both Yiddish and Russian.

Yiddish introduced

Via [Panel 23](#)

Yiddish was intended to serve as the bedrock of a non-religious, Soviet Jewish culture and community. The Kremlin believed that the use of Yiddish as the national secular language of the Jews would make the Jewish Autonomous Region the new center of Soviet Jewish life.

Jewish theater and library

Via [Panel 24](#)

A Jewish theater and a library with a sizable Judaica collection opened in the mid-1930s [is pictured here]. Soviet Jewish writers and artists were expected to condemn Judaism and traditional Jewish life, glorifying instead the achievements of Soviet power, particularly the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Region...The Kaganovich Jewish Theater was named after prominent party leader Lazar Kaganovich, who was Jewish. The theater was established in 1934, when members of the Moscow State Jewish Theater arrived in the J.A.R. along with musicians, technical personnel, and costumes. Its first show was an adaptation of a Sholem Aleichem story.

Initial promise

Via [Panel 25](#)

Despite the initial promise to find agricultural work for Jewish settlers, most Jews who migrated to the Jewish Autonomous Region shied away from farm labor and gravitated to jobs with which they had prior experience such as employment in retail and service sectors. By 1939 less than one quarter of the Jews living in the region engaged in agricultural pursuits.



Atheism a major component

Via [Panel 26](#)

Atheism was a major component of the Kremlin's official policy. In an effort to combat religious practices among Jews, the leadership of the Jewish Autonomous Region held a series of lectures designed to undercut the appeal of Jewish Religion. This notice from the 1930s was posted throughout the region and listed a series of lectures and other events that were held in factories and workers' clubs at Passover time. The lectures covered such topics as the incompatibility of socialism and religion. The programs also targeted women, who were seen as the bulwark of religious belief and practices in the Jewish family...This notice [pictured above] features the following events:

- Lecture by Comrade Rabinovich on "The Struggle Against Religion, The Struggle for Socialism" and film for the factory workers at the "First of May" Club on April 11.
- Lecture by Comrade Raitman on "The Class Nature of Passover" and amateur concert for all children of school ages at the "Detail" Club on April 12.
- Lecture by Comrade Kazakevich on "The Woman in the Front Ranks of Militant Atheists" and film for the Anti-Religious Conference of Women on April 13.

The purges

Via [Panel 27](#)

The bloodletting of the purges unleashed by Stalin and the secret police between 1936 and 1938 directly affected the inhabitants of the Jewish Autonomous Region. No reliable estimates exist regarding the number of Jewish Autonomous Region residents who fell victim to the purges. In all probability, thousands of people were arrested, sent to the burgeoning labor camp system, or executed. The political leadership of the region was particularly hard hit by arrests and executions. Matvei Khavkin, head of the Communist Party in the Jewish Autonomous Region, was arrested for "counter-revolutionary activities." Khavkin survived his interrogation by the secret police and managed to emerge alive from the gulag after Stalin's death in 1953. Khavkin's wife was also imprisoned after being accused of trying to poison the prominent party leader Lazar Kaganovich with homemade gefilte fish during his 1936 visit to the Jewish Autonomous Region.

Supposed failure

Via [Panel 28](#)

With the onset of the purges, the Kremlin gutted all projects that promoted Yiddish and Jewish culture in the Jewish Autonomous Region. But responsibility for the failure of the Birobidzhan experiment does not belong solely to the Kremlin. Young Soviet Jews were assimilating at a rapid pace, and Yiddish and the Jewish Autonomous Region did not figure prominently in the minds of those seeking to get ahead. Finally, the effort to create a new Jewish identity devoid of religious heritage and traditions proved to be a difficult task. By the end of the 1930s, the

settlement of Jews in the region came to a standstill. Most non-Soviet observers concluded that the experiment in building a Soviet Zion had failed.

Breathing new life

Via [Panel 29](#)

Ironically, the trauma of the Second World War breathed life again into the Jewish Autonomous Region, as it did into Soviet Jewish society in general. In 1945 the government once again revived the idea of Jewish migration to the region in order to address the problems confronting Soviet Jews in the wake of the war. Between 1946 and 1948, perhaps as many as 10,000 Jews moved to the Jewish Autonomous Region. Estimates indicate that as many as 30,000 Jews were living in the region by the end of 1948.

American Birobidzhan Committee (Ambijan)

Via [Panel 30](#)

The American Birobidzhan Committee (Ambijan) was a Communist front organization formed in the 1930s. After the Second World War, it actively promoted the cause of the Jewish Autonomous Region by raising money and sending food and clothing. In this fundraising brochure [shown here], AMBIJAN stressed the need to resettle children orphaned during World War II. The support of prominent public figures, such as Albert Einstein who served as honorary president, lent AMBIJAN credibility and a high profile. The figure of 25,000 Jewish settlers to the Jewish Autonomous Region since the end of the war was an exaggeration.

Concentrated postwar effort

Via [Panel 31](#)

The concentrated effort to populate the Jewish Autonomous Region with Jews occurred as the Kremlin relaxed its grip on Soviet society and permitted a resurgence of Jewish cultural life. Despite this revival, artists and writers were confined by the ideological straightjacket constraining them since the 1930s.

- The Yiddish daily newspaper Birobidzhaner shtern was revitalized.
- Yiddish once again became an obligatory subject in schools. Nowhere else in the Soviet Union did this occur.
- The Jewish Theater expanded its activities and performed plays about the Holocaust.
- A Yiddish publishing house was established, which produced literary journals and textbooks in Yiddish.
- A Jewish Division of the Historical Museum of the Jewish Autonomous Region opened in 1945.
- A synagogue, albeit without a rabbi, opened in September 1947. Jews in Irkutsk donated a Torah scroll, and some 400 to 500 persons attended Rosh Hashanah services that year.

Supposed "murderous effort"

Shows the inherently anti-communist nature of this project.

Via [Panel 32](#)

In 1948 Stalin launched a murderous campaign to destroy all Jewish intellectual and cultural activity in the Soviet Union. He and others feared the perceived political disloyalty of Soviet Jewry after the establishment of the State of Israel, and were motivated by unrestrained anti-Semitism. In the Jewish Autonomous Region itself, prominent Jewish officials and cultural figures were arrested and imprisoned. In perhaps the most serious attack, some 30,000 books from the Judaica collection of the public library were burned. The anti-Jewish assault in Stalin's last years delivered a mortal blow to the Birobidzhan experiment.

Supposed promise broken

Again, anti-communist ideals.

Via [Panel 33](#)

Whatever promise the Jewish autonomous region held in the minds of both foreign and Soviet Jews had evaporated by the time of Stalin's death in 1953. The region had never become a center of Jewish culture and life. The post-Stalin era did not bring any substantial changes to the Jewish Autonomous Region, and Jewish life remained sterile. Nonetheless, the continued existence of the Jewish Autonomous Region served the Kremlin's purposes, presumably as proof of the regime's commitment to allow Jews national and cultural rights.

Perestroika enters

Via [Panel 34](#)

The advent of perestroika and glasnost' in the mid-1980s encouraged local officials and Jewish activists to revive Jewish life in the Jewish Autonomous Region. During the first half of the 1990s, Yiddish was again offered as a subject in several schools, including the Birobidzhan Teachers' College. Sunday schools were opened and public celebrations of Jewish holidays became commonplace.

Future of the territory

Via [Panel 35](#)

What is the future of a Jewish territory if there are no Jews? Of the current population of over 200,000 in the Jewish Autonomous Region, no more than a few thousand are Jewish. In addition, hundreds are leaving the region every year for Israel and other places. Like many Jews elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, most Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Region feel isolated from their Jewish heritage. Few have any familiarity with Judaism or Yiddish. Still, there is no sign that the

official designation of the Jewish Autonomous Region will be taken away. Nor is there any indication that the Jewish community of the Jewish Autonomous Region, no matter how small, will lose interest in recovering its Jewish heritage. More than seventy years of communist rule did not extinguish all forms of Jewish identity. Yet the state of affairs in Birobidzhan today strongly suggests that the future of Jewish life in that region is bleak. The hopes and aspirations that so many of the original Jewish settlers placed in the Birobidzhan experiment remain unfulfilled.

#### Notes

Also see [intro](#) and [panel 1](#). There are also pages for the [timeline](#), [multimedia](#), page for [comments](#)

#### Articles about this

- [Wikimedia photographs about](#)
- [Birobidzhan Jewish autonomous region documentary in 2009 aired on RT](#)
- [Official portal of the Jewish Autonomous Region public authorities](#)
- [History of formation and development of the Jewish Autonomous Region](#)
- [Birobidzhan \(Jewish Autonomous Region\) film excerpt, created in 1934 in the eastern USSR](#)
- D. Bergelson, [The Jewish Autonomous Region](#), 1939.
- [Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region Hit by \\$90 Mln Flood Damage – Official](#), 2013.
- [Jewish Autonomous Region's legislature approves new governor](#), 2010.
- [Why some Jews would rather live in Siberia than Israel](#), Christian Science Monitor, 2010, anti-communist.
- [Revival of a Soviet Zion: Birobidzhan celebrates its Jewish heritage](#), The Guardian, 2017, undoubtedly anti-communist.
- [Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region In Siberia 'Ready' To House European Jews](#), US government grey Propaganda Radio "Free" Europe/Radio "Liberty"
- [entry](#) in bourgeois Encyclopædia Britannica
- [Jewish autonomous oblast, Russia \(Yevreyskaya\)](#), pro-Russia website
- BBC article titled ["Russia's forgotten Jewish land"](#)
- NY Times article titled ["Despite Predictions, Jewish Homeland in Siberia Retains Its Appeal"](#)
- [The Jewish Revolution: how Soviet Jews pursued artistic modernity and political freedom after 1917](#) (bourgeois scholars)
- [Birobidjan: The Story of the First Jewish State](#) (bourgeois scholars)
- [Why did Stalin create a Jewish state in the distant reaches of Siberia?](#)
- [A land without a people?: A visit to Russia's Jewish autonomous region](#)
- [Now playing in London: Birobidzhan, the musical!](#) (Zionist newspaper)
- [The Formation of the Soviet Jewish Homeland – Birobidzhan](#)
- ["Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland. An Illustrated History, 1928–1996" review](#)
- [The failed Soviet project to build a Jewish homeland in the Russian Far East](#) (Zionist website)
- [Birobidjan:the original Jewish homeland](#)

- NY Times, [Masha Gessen on a Planned Jewish Homeland in Soviet Russia](#)
- Yale University, [Microform Collection: Birobidzhan: An Experiment to Create a Soviet Jewish Homeland](#)
- [Birobidzhan: The Soviet Jewish Homeland](#) (Zionist website)
- James von Geldern, [Birobidzhan](#)
- [Profiles: Birobidzhan Jewish Community](#)
- [Far East Jewish Community Chairman Passes Away](#)
- [Far Eastern Research Center for Jewish Culture and Yiddish](#)
- [Governor Voices Support for Growing Far East Jewish Community](#)
- [Birobidzhan - New Rabbi, New Synagogue](#), also see [Birobidzhan - Back to the Synagogue](#) in the Washington Post.
- [Jewish Cemeteries Catalog for Birobidjan](#)
- [International Yiddish Summer School Opens in Birobidzhan](#)
- [Birobidjan, Russia](#) and specific page on [Jewish life](#)
- [Birobidzhan: A Yiddishland in the Far East](#)
- [Emigration to Israel empties 'homeland' for Jews contrived in the Stalinist era](#) (CNN article, anti-Communist)
- [Library of Congress collections](#)
- ['Sad And Absurd': The U.S.S.R.'s Disastrous Effort To Create A Jewish Homeland](#), NPR article, anti-communist
- [Who Will 'Swallow Up' the Jewish Autonomous Oblast – Khabarovsk Region or China?](#), anti-Russia publication.
- [Yiddish returns to Birobidzhan](#), Zionist publication.
- [Birobidzhan: Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region is not so Jewish](#), People's World.
- [Jewish Autonomous Region -- Birobidzhan](#)
- [Where the Jews Aren't: The Sad and Absurd Story of Birobidzhan, Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region](#), anti-communist book.
- [Jewish Culture Rises From Ruin Of Stalin Experiment](#), anti-communist article.
- [Russia's Jewish Flag Is Not Gay, Kremlin Expert Says](#), horrible BuzzFeed
- [In Eastern Russia, the Idea of a Jewish Autonomy Is Being Brought Back to Life](#), Zionist publication
- [A Promised Land in the U.S.S.R.](#), New Republic, anti-communist article.
- [Jewish Mother Russia](#), another anti-communist article.
- [Jewish enclave created in Siberia by Stalin stages a revival](#), 2004, anti-communist article.
- [Siberia entry in Jewish Virtual Library](#)
- [Jews and Cossacks in the Jewish Autonomous Region](#)
- [75 years on, Jews in Russia's Jewish autonomous district hold on](#), Zionist publication.
- [Before Crimea Was an Ethnic Russian Stronghold, It Was a Potential Jewish Homeland](#), Zionist publication.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/jewishhomeland>

## Deportations in the USSR

- [The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union by Nikloai Bougai](#)
- [The Crimean Tatars: section on deportation](#)

- Eliza Bair Guchinova, [Deportation of the Kalmyks \(1943–1956\): Stigmatized Ethnicity](#)
- Alexander Werth, [Russia at War: 1941-1945](#)
- Felix Chuev, [Molotov Remembers](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/deportations>

## The "Purges" and "Gulags"

The Moscow Trials

- [The Moscow Trials and the "Great Terror" of 1937-1938: What the Evidence Shows by Grover Furr](#) and a [related video](#)

Victims of the Soviet Penal System: Looking at the evidence

- [Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-war Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence](#). Also PDF of this article [here](#)

Assorted articles

- [Lies Concerning the History of the Soviet Union](#)
- [Fascists say that person nabbed in purges was on their side](#)
- [Some progressives endorsed purges](#)
- [TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERROGATION OF THE ARRESTED PERSON EZHOV NIKOLAI IVANOVICH in 1939](#)

Varied books

- J. Arch Getty, [Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives](#)
- J. Arch Getty, [Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938](#)
- J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, [The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939](#)
- Robert W. Thurston, [Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941](#), 1996.

Other possible books

- Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s*
- Stephen Wheatcroft, *The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-45*
- Michael Geyer, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/purgesgulags>

# Collectivization and natural famine (not man-made) in the USSR

Stalin's remarks

- Josef Stalin, [The Results of the First Five-Year Plan](#), 1933. Long enough it will not be reprinted here.
- Josef Stalin, [Speech Delivered At The First All-Union Congress Of Collective-Farm Shock Brigaders](#) and a [reading of the speech](#)

Comrade collective farmers, men and women! I did not intend to speak at your congress. I did not intend to because the previous speakers have said all that had to be said -- and have said it well and to the point. Is it worth while to speak after that? But as you insist, and the power is in your hands (prolonged applause ), I must submit.

I shall say a few words on various questions.

## **The Collective-Farm Path Is the Only Right Path**

First question. Is the path which the collective-farm peasantry has taken the right path, is the path of collective farming the right one?

That is not an idle question. You shock brigaders of the collective farms evidently have no doubt that the collective farms are on the right path. Possibly, for that reason, the question will seem superfluous to you. But not all peasants think as you do. There are still not a few among the peasants, even among the collective farmers, who have doubts as to whether the collective-farm path is the right one. And there is nothing surprising about it.

Indeed, for hundreds of years people have lived in the old way, have followed the old path, have bent their backs to the kulaks and landlords, to the usurers and speculators. It cannot be said that that old, capitalist path was approved by the peasants. But that old path was a beaten path, the customary path, and no one had actually proved that it was possible to live in a different way, in a better way. The more so as in all bourgeois countries people are still living in the old way. . . . And suddenly the Bolsheviks break in on this old stagnant life, break in like a storm and say: It is time to abandon the old path, it is time to begin living in a new way, in the collective-farm way; it is time to begin living not as everyone lives in bourgeois countries, but in a new way, co-operatively. But what is this new life -- who can tell? May it not turn out to be worse than the old life? At all events, the new path is not the customary path, it is not a beaten path, not yet a fully explored path. Would it not be better to keep to the old path? Would it not be better to wait a little before embarking on the new, collective-farm path? Is it worth while to take the risk?

These are the doubts that are now troubling one section of the labouring peasantry.

Ought we not to dispel these doubts? Ought we not to bring these doubts out into the light of day and show what they are worth? Clearly, we ought to.



Hence, the question I have just put cannot be described as an idle one.

And so, is the path which the collective-farm peasantry has taken the right one?

Some comrades think that the transition to the new path, to the collective-farm path, started in our country three years ago. This is only partly true. Of course, the development of collective farms on a mass scale started in our country three years ago. The transition, as we know, was marked by the routing of the kulaks and by a movement among the vast masses of the poor and middle peasantry to join the collective farms. All that is true. But in order to start this mass transition to the collective farms, certain preliminary conditions had to be available, without which, generally speaking, the mass collective-farm movement would have been inconceivable.

First of all, we had to have the Soviet power, which has helped and continues to help the peasantry to take the collective-farm path:

Secondly, it was necessary to drive out the landlords and the capitalists, to take the factories and the land away from them and declare these the property of the people.

Thirdly, it was necessary to curb the kulaks and to take machines and tractors away from them.

Fourthly, it was necessary to declare that the machines and tractors could be used only by the poor and middle peasants united in collective farms.

Finally, it was necessary to industrialize the country, to set up a new tractor industry, to build new factories for the manufacture of agricultural machinery, in order to supply tractors and machines in abundance to the collective-farm peasantry.

Without these preliminary conditions there could have been no question of the mass transition to the collective-farm path that started three years ago.

Hence, in order to adopt the collective-farm path it was necessary first of all to accomplish the October Revolution, to overthrow the capitalists and landlords, to take the land and factories away from them and to set up a new industry.

It was with the October Revolution that the transition to the new path, to the collective-farm path, started. This transition developed with fresh force only three years ago because it was not until then that the economic results of the October Revolution made themselves fully felt, it was not until then that success was achieved in pushing forward the industrialization of the country.

The history of nations knows not a few revolutions. But those revolutions differ from the October Revolution in that all of them were one-sided revolutions. One form of exploitation of the working people was replaced by another form of exploitation, but exploitation itself remained. One set of exploiters and oppressors was replaced by another set of exploiters and oppressors, but exploiters and oppressors, as such, remained. Only the October Revolution set itself the aim of abolishing all exploitation and of eliminating all exploiters and oppressors.

The revolution of the slaves eliminated the slave-owners and abolished the form of exploitation of the toilers as slaves. But in their place it set up the serf-owners and the form of exploitation of the toilers as serfs. One set of exploiters was replaced by another set of exploiters. Under the slave system the "law" permitted the slave-owner to kill his slaves. Under serfdom the "law" permitted the serf-owner "only" to sell his serfs.

The revolution of the peasant-serfs eliminated the serfowners and abolished the form of exploitation through serfdom. But in their place it set up the capitalists and landlords, the capitalist and landlord form of exploitation of the toilers. One set of exploiters was replaced by another set of exploiters. Under the serf system the "law" permitted the sale of serfs. Under the capitalist system the "law" permits "only" of the toilers being doomed to unemployment and destitution, to ruin and death from starvation.

It was only our Soviet revolution, only our October Revolution that dealt with the question, not of substituting one set of exploiters for another, not of substituting one form of exploitation for another, but of eradicating all exploitation, of eradicating all exploiters, all the rich and oppressors, old and new. (Prolonged applause.)

That is why the October Revolution was a preliminary condition and a necessary prerequisite for the peasants' transition to the new, collective-farm path.

Did the peasants act rightly in supporting the October Revolution? Yes, they did. They acted rightly, because the October Revolution helped them to shake off the yoke of the landlords and capitalists, the usurers and kulaks, the merchants and speculators.

But that is only one side of the question. It is all very well to drive out the oppressors, to drive out the landlords and capitalists, to curb the kulaks and speculators. But that is not enough. In order to become entirely free from the old fetters it is not enough merely to rout the exploiters; it is necessary also to build a new life -- to build a life that will enable the labouring peasants to improve their material conditions and culture and make continuous progress from day to day and year to year. In order to achieve this, a new system must be set up in the countryside, the collective-farm system. That is the other side of the question.

What is the difference between the old system and the new, collective-farm system?

Under the old system the peasants worked singly, following the ancient methods of their forefathers and using antiquated implements of labour; they worked for the landlords and capitalists, the kulaks and speculators; they worked and lived half-starved while they enriched others. Under the new, collective-farm system the peasants work in common, cooperatively, with the help of modern implements -- tractors and agricultural machinery; they work for themselves and their collective farms; they live without capitalists and landlords, without kulaks and speculators; they work with the object of raising their standard of welfare and culture from day to day. Over there, under the old system, the government is a bourgeois government, and it supports the rich against the labouring peasantry. Here, under the new, collective-farm system, the government is a workers' and peasants' government, and it supports the workers and peasants

against all the rich of whatever kind. The old system leads to capitalism. The new system leads to socialism.

There you have the two paths, the capitalist path and the socialist path: the path forward -- to socialism, and the path backward -- to capitalism.

There are people who think that some sort of third path could be followed. This unknown third path is most eagerly clutched at by some wavering comrades who are not yet convinced that the collective-farm path is the right one. They want us to return to the old system, to return to individual farming, but without capitalists and landlords. Moreover, they "only" want us to permit the existence of the kulaks and other small capitalists as a legitimate phenomenon of our economic system. Actually, this is not a third path, but the second path -- the path to capitalism. For what does it mean to return to individual farming and to restore the kulaks? It means restoring kulak bondage, restoring the exploitation of the peasantry by the kulaks and giving the kulaks power. But is it possible to restore the kulaks and at the same time to preserve the Soviet power? No, it is not possible. The restoration of the kulaks is bound to lead to the creation of a kulak power and to the liquidation of the Soviet power -- hence, it is bound to lead to the formation of a bourgeois government. And the formation of a bourgeois government is bound to lead in its turn to the restoration of the landlords and capitalists, to the restoration of capitalism. The so-called third path is actually the second path, the path leading back to capitalism. Ask the peasants whether they want to restore kulak bondage, to return to capitalism, to destroy the Soviet power and restore power to the landlords and capitalists. Just ask them, and you will find out which path the majority of the labouring peasants regard as the only right path.

Hence, there are only two paths: either forward and uphill -- to the new, collective-farm system; or backward and down hill -- to the old kulak-capitalist system.

There is no third path.

The labouring peasants did right to reject the capitalist path and take the path of collective-farm development.

It is said that the collective-farm path is the right path, but a difficult one. That is only partly true. Of course, there are difficulties on this path. A good life cannot be obtained without effort. But the point is that the main difficulties are over, and those difficulties which now confront you are not worth talking about seriously. At all events, compared with the difficulties which the workers experienced 10-15 years ago, your present difficulties, comrade collective farmers, seem mere child's play. Your speakers here have praised the workers of Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov, and the Donbas. They said that these workers have achievements to their credit and that you, collective farmers, have far fewer achievements. It seems to me that even a certain comradely envy was apparent in the remarks of your speakers, as if to say: How good it would be if we collective-farm peasants had the same achievements as you workers of Leningrad, Moscow, the Donbas, and Kharkov. . . .

That is all very well. But do you know what these achievements cost the workers of Leningrad and Moscow, what privations they had to endure in order finally to attain these achievements? I

could relate to you some facts from the life of the workers in 1918, when for whole weeks not a piece of bread, let alone meat or other food, was distributed to the workers. The best times were considered to be the days on which we were able to distribute to the workers in Leningrad and Mos-cow one-eighth of a pound of black bread each, and even that was half bran. And that lasted not merely a month or six months, but for two whole years. But the workers bore it and did not lose heart; for they knew that better times would come and that they would achieve decisive successes. Well -- you see that the workers were not mistaken. Just compare your difficulties and privations with the difficulties and privations which the workers have endured, and you will see that they are not even worth talking about seriously.

What is needed to push forward the collective-farm movement and extend collective-farm development to the utmost?

What is needed, in the first place, is that the collective farms should have land fully secured to them and suitable for cultivation. Do you have that? Yes, you do. It is well known that the best lands have been transferred to the collective farms and have been durably secured to them. Hence, the collective farmers can cultivate and improve their land as they please without any fear that it will be taken from them and given to somebody else.

What is needed, secondly, is that the collective farmers should have at their disposal tractors and machines. Do you have them? Yes, you do. Everyone knows that our tractor works and agricultural machinery works produce primarily and mainly for the collective farms, supplying them with all modern implements.

What is needed, finally, is that the government should support the collective-farm peasants to the utmost both with men and money, and that it should prevent the last remnants of the hostile classes from disrupting the collective farms. Have you such a government? Yes, you have. It is called the Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Government. Name another country where the government supports, not the capitalists and landlords, not the kulaks and other rich, but the labouring peasants. There is not, nor has there ever been, another country like this in the world. Only here, in the Land of Soviets, does a government exist which stands solidly for the workers and collective-farm peasants, for all the working people of town and country, against all the rich and the exploiters. (Prolonged applause.)

Hence, you have all that is needed to extend collective-farm development and to free yourself entirely from the old fetters.

Of you only one thing is demanded -- and that is to work conscientiously; to distribute collective-farm incomes according to the amount of work done; to take care of collective farm property, to take care of the tractors and machines; to see to it that the horses are well looked after; to fulfil the assignments of your workers' and peasants' state; to consolidate the collective farms and to expel from the collective farms the kulaks and kulak agents who have wormed their way into them.

You will surely agree with me that to overcome these difficulties, i.e., to work conscientiously and to take good care of collective-farm property, is not so very difficult. The more so that you

are now working, not for the rich and not for exploiters, but for yourselves, for your own collective farms.

As you see, the collective-farm path, the path of socialism, is the only right path for the labouring peasants.

### **Our Immediate Task -- To Make All the Collective Farmers Prosperous**

Second question. What have we achieved on the new path, on our collective-farm path, and what do we expect to achieve within the next two or three years?

Socialism is a good thing. A happy, socialist life is unquestionably a good thing. But all that is a matter of the future. The main question now is not what we shall achieve in the future. The main question is: What have we already achieved at present? The peasantry has taken the collective-farm path. That is very good. But what has it achieved on this path? What tangible results have we achieved by following the collective-farm path?

One of our achievements is that we have helped the vast masses of the poor peasants to join the collective farms. One of our achievements is that by joining the collective farms, where they have at their disposal the best land and the finest instruments of production, the vast masses of the poor peasants have risen to the level of middle peasants. One of our achievements is that the vast masses of the poor peasants, who formerly lived in semi-starvation, have now, in the collective farms, become middle peasants, have attained material security. One of our achievements is that we have put a stop to the differentiation of the peasants into poor peasants and kulaks; that we have routed the kulaks and have helped the poor peasants to become masters of their own labour in the collective farms, to become middle peasants.

What was the situation before the expansion of collective-farm development about four years ago? The kulaks were growing rich and were on the upgrade. The poor peasants were becoming poorer, were sinking into ruin and falling into bondage to the kulaks. The middle peasants were trying to climb up to the kulaks, but they were continually tumbling down and swelling the ranks of the poor peasants, to the amusement of the kulaks. It is not difficult to see that the only ones to profit by this scramble were the kulaks, and perhaps, here and there, some of the well-to-do peasants. Out of every 100 households in the countryside you could count 4 to 5 kulak households, 8 or 10 well-to-do peasant households, 45 to 50 middle-peasant households, and some 35 poor-peasant households. Hence, at the lowest estimate, 35 per cent of all the peasant households were poor-peasant households, compelled to bear the yoke of kulak bondage. That is apart from the economically weaker strata of the middle peasants, comprising more than half of the middle peasantry, whose condition differed little from that of the poor peasants and who were directly dependent upon the kulaks.

By the expansion of collective-farm development we have succeeded in abolishing this scramble and injustice; we have smashed the yoke of kulak bondage, brought this vast mass of poor peasants into the collective farms, given them a secure existence there, and raised them to the level of middle peasants, able to make use of the collective-farm land, the privileges granted to collective farms, tractors and agricultural machinery.

And what does that mean? It means that not less than 20 million of the peasant population, not less than 20 million poor peasants have been rescued from destitution and ruin, have been rescued from kulak bondage, and have attained material security thanks to the collective farms.

This is a great achievement, comrades. It is an achievement such as has never been known in the world before, such as no other state in the world has yet made.

There you have the practical, tangible results of collective-farm development, the results of the fact that the peasants have taken the collective-farm path.

But this is only our first step, our first achievement on the path of collective-farm development.

It would be wrong to think that we must stop at this first step, at this first achievement. No, comrades, we cannot stop at this achievement. In order to advance further and definitively consolidate the collective farms we must take a second step, we must secure a new achievement. What is this second step? It is to raise the collective farmers, both the former poor peasants and the former middle peasants, to a still higher level. It is to make all the collective farmers prosperous. Yes, comrades, prosperous. (Prolonged applause.)

Thanks to the collective farms we have succeeded in raising the poor peasants to the level of the middle peasants. That is very good. But it is not enough. We must now succeed in taking another step forward, and help all the collective farmers -- both the former poor peasants and the former middle peasants -- to rise to the level of prosperous peasants. This can be achieved, and we must achieve it at all costs. (Prolonged applause.)

We now have all that is needed to achieve this aim. At present our machines and tractors are badly utilized. Our land is not well cultivated. We need only make better use of the machines and tractors, we need only improve the cultivation of the land, to increase the quantity of our produce two-fold and three-fold. And this will be quite sufficient to convert all our collective farmers into prosperous tillers of collective-farm fields.

What was the position previously as regards the prosperous peasants? In order to become prosperous a peasant had to wrong his neighbours; he had to exploit them; to sell to them dear and buy from them cheap; to hire some labourers and thoroughly exploit them; to accumulate some capital and then, having strengthened his position, to creep into the ranks of the kulaks. This, indeed, explains why formerly, under individual farming, the prosperous peasants aroused suspicion and hatred among the poor and middle peasants. Now the position is different. And the conditions are now different, too. For collective farmers to become prosperous it is not at all necessary now that they wrong or exploit their neighbours. And besides, it is not easy to exploit anybody now; for private ownership of land and the renting of land no longer exist in our country, the machines and tractors belong to the state, and people who own capital are not in fashion in the collective farms. There was such a fashion in the past, but it is gone for ever. Only one thing is now needed for the collective farmers to become prosperous, namely, to work in the collective farms conscientiously, to make proper use of the tractors and machines, to make proper use of the draught cattle, to cultivate the land properly and to take care of the collective-farm property.

Sometimes it is said: If we are living under socialism, why do we have to toil? We toiled before and we are toiling now; is it not time we left off toiling? Such talk is fundamentally wrong, comrades. It is the philosophy of loafers and not of honest working people. Socialism does not in the least repudiate work. On the contrary, socialism is based on work. Socialism and work are inseparable from each other.

Lenin, our great teacher, said: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat." What does this mean? Against whom are Lenin's words directed? Against the exploiters, against those who do not work themselves, but compel others to work for them, and get rich at the expense of others. And against whom else? Against those who loaf and want to live at the expense of others. Socialism demands, not loafing, but that all should work conscientiously; that they should work, not for others, not for the rich and the exploiters, but for themselves, for the community. And if we work conscientiously, work for ourselves, for our collective farms, then we shall succeed in a matter of two or three years in raising all the collective farmers, both the former poor peasants and the former middle peasants, to the level of prosperous peasants, to the level of people enjoying an abundance of produce and leading a fully cultured life.

That is our immediate task. We can achieve it, and we must achieve it at all costs. (Prolonged applause.)

### **Miscellaneous remarks**

And now permit me to make a few miscellaneous remarks.

First of all about our Party members in the countryside. There are Party members among you, but still more of you are non-Party people. It is very good that more non-Party people than Party members are present at this congress, because it is precisely the non-Party people that we must enlist for our work first of all. There are Communists who approach the non-Party collective farmers in a Bolshevik manner. But there are also those who plume themselves on being Party members and keep non-Party people at a distance. That is bad and harmful. The strength of the Bolsheviks, the strength of the Communists lies in the fact that they are able to rally millions of active non-Party people around our Party. We Bolsheviks would never have achieved the successes we have now achieved had we not been able to win for the Party the confidence of millions of non-Party workers and peasants. And what is needed for this? What is needed is for the Party members not to isolate themselves from the non-Party people, for the Party members not to withdraw into their Party shell, not to plume themselves on being Party members, but to heed the voice of the non-Party people, not only to teach the non-Party people, but also to learn from them.

It must not be forgotten that Party members do not drop from the skies. We must remember that all Party members were at some time non-Party people. Today a man does not belong to the Party; tomorrow he will become a Party member. What is there to get conceited about? Among us old Bolsheviks there are not a few who have been working in the Party for 20 or 30 years. But there was a time when we, too, were non-Party people. What would have happened to us 20 or 30 years ago if the Party members at that time had domineered over us and had not let us come close to the Party? Perhaps we would then have been kept away from the Party for a number of

years. Yet we old Bolsheviks are not people of the least account in the world, comrades. (Laughter, prolonged applause.)

That is why our Party members, the present young Party members who sometimes turn up their noses at non-Party people, should remember all this, should remember that it is not conceit but modesty that is the adornment of the Bolshevik.

Now a few words about the women, the women collective farmers. The question of women in the collective farms is a big question, comrades. I know that many of you underestimate the women and even laugh at them. But that is a mistake, comrades, a serious mistake. The point is not only that women constitute half the population. Primarily, the point is that the collective-farm movement has advanced a number of remarkable and capable women to leading positions. Look at this congress, at the delegates, and you will realize that women have long ago ceased to be backward and have come into the front ranks. The women in the collective farms are a great force. To keep this force down would be criminal. It is our duty to bring the women in the collective farms forward and to make use of this force.

Of course, not so long ago, the Soviet government had a slight misunderstanding with the women collective farmers. That was over the cow. But now this business about the cow has been settled, and the misunderstanding has been removed. (Prolonged applause.) We have achieved a position where the majority of the collective-farm households already have a cow each. Another year or two will pass and there will not be a single collective farmer without his own cow. We Bolsheviks will see to it that every one of our collective farmers has a cow. (Prolonged applause.)

As for the women collective farmers themselves, they must remember the power and significance of the collective farms for women; they must remember that only in the collective farm do they have the opportunity of being on an equal footing with men. Without collective farms -- inequality; in collective farms -- equal rights. Let our comrades, the women collective farmers, remember this and let them cherish the collective-farm system as the apple of their eye. (Prolonged applause.)

A few words about the members of the Young Communist League, young men and women, in the collective farms. The youth are our future, our hope, comrades. The youth have to take our place, the place of the old people. They have to carry our banner to final victory. Among the peasants there are not a few old people, borne down by the burden of the past, burdened with the habits and the recollections of the old life. Naturally, they are not always able to keep pace with the Party, to keep pace with the Soviet system. Our youth are different. They are free from the burden of the past, and it is easiest for them to assimilate Lenin's behests. And precisely because it is easiest for the youth to assimilate Lenin's behests it is their mission to give a helping hand to the laggards and waverers. True, they lack knowledge. But knowledge is a thing that can be acquired. They may not have it today, but they will have it tomorrow. Hence, the task is to study and study again the principles of Leninism. Comrade members of the Young Communist League! Learn the principles of Bolshevism and lead the waverers forward! Talk less and work more, and your success will be assured. (Applause.)



A few words about the individual peasants. Little has been said here about the individual peasants. But that does not mean that they no longer exist. No, it does not mean that. Individual peasants do exist, and we must not leave them out of our calculations; for they are our collective farmers of tomorrow. I know that one section of the individual peasants has become utterly corrupt and has taken to speculating. That, no doubt, explains why the collective farmers accept individual peasants into the collective farms with great circumspection, and sometimes do not accept them at all. This, of course, is quite right, and there cannot be any objection to it. But there is another, larger section of individual peasants, who have not taken to speculating and who earn their bread by honest labour. These individual peasants, perhaps, would not be averse to joining the collective farms. But they are hindered in this, on the one hand, by their hesitation as to whether the collective-farm path is the right path; and, on the other hand, by the bitter feelings now existing amongst the collective farmers against the individual peasants.

Of course, we must understand the feelings of the collective farmers and appreciate their situation. During the past years they have suffered not a few insults and jeers at the hands of the individual peasants. But insults and jeers must not be allowed to have decisive importance here. He is a bad leader who cannot forget an offence, and who puts his own feelings above the interests of the collective-farm cause. If you want to be leaders, you must be able to forget the insults to which you were subjected by certain individual peasants. Two years ago I received a letter from a peasant woman, a widow, living in the Volga region. She complained that the collective farm refused to accept her as a member, and she asked for my support. I made inquiries at the collective farm. I received a reply from the collective farm stating that they could not accept her because she had insulted a collective-farm meeting. Now, what was it all about? It seems that at a meeting of peasants at which the collective farmers called upon the individual peasants to join the collective farm, this very widow, in reply to this appeal, had lifted up her skirt and said -- Here, take your collective farm! (Laughter.) Undoubtedly she had behaved badly and had insulted the meeting. But should her application to join the collective farm be rejected if, a year later, she sincerely repented and admitted her error? I think that her application should not be rejected. That is what I wrote to the collective farm. The widow was accepted into the collective farm. And what happened? It turns out that she is now working in the collective farm, not in the last, but in the front ranks. (Applause.)

There you have another example, showing that leaders, if they want to be true leaders, must be able to forget an offence if the interests of the cause demand it.

The same thing must be said about individual peasants generally. I am not opposed to the exercise of circumspection in accepting people into the collective farms. But I am against barring the path to the collective farms to all individual peasants without discrimination. That is not our policy, not the Bolshevik policy. The collective farmers must not forget that not long ago they themselves were individual peasants.

Finally, a few words about the letter written by the collective farmers of Bezenchuk.[117] This letter has been published, and you must have read it. It is unquestionably a good letter. It shows that among our collective farmers there are not a few experienced and politically conscious organizers and agitators in the cause of collective farming, who are the pride of our country. But this letter contains one incorrect passage with which we cannot possibly agree. The point is that

the Bezenchuk comrades describe their work in the collective farm as modest and all but insignificant work, whereas they describe the efforts of orators and leaders, who sometimes make speeches of inordinate length, as great and creative work. Can we agree with that? No, comrades, we cannot possibly agree with it. The Bezenchuk comrades have made a mistake here. Perhaps they made the mistake out of modesty. But the mistake does not cease to be a mistake for all that. The times have passed when leaders were regarded as the only makers of history, while the workers and peasants were not taken into account. The destinies of nations and of states are now determined, not only by leaders, but primarily and mainly by the vast masses of the working people. The workers and the peasants, who without fuss and noise are building factories and mills, constructing mines and railways, building collective farms and state farms, creating all the values of life, feeding and clothing the whole world -- they are the real heroes and the creators of the new life. Apparently, our Bezenchuk comrades have forgotten this. It is not good when people overrate their strength and begin to be conceited about the services they have rendered. That leads to boasting, and boasting is not a good thing. But it is still worse when people begin to underrate their strength and fail to see that their "modest" and "insignificant" work is really great and creative work that decides the fate of history.

I would like the Bezenchuk comrades to approve this slight amendment of mine to their letter.

With that, let us conclude, comrades.

(Loud and prolonged applause, increasing to an ovation. All rise and greet Comrade Stalin. Loud cheers. Shouts : "Long live Comrade Stalin, hurrah!" "Long live the advanced collective farmer!" "Long live our leader, Comrade Stalin!")

The anti-communist myth of Holodomor

- [Bolshevik revolution centennial series: the anti-Communist myth of holodomor](#), PLP, 2018:

There are many anti-communist lies spread by bosses everywhere, including about Ukraine. The far right-wing is strong in Ukraine in part because it is backed by the Ukrainian government, which masquerades as "not far right." Fascist lies are accepted as the official truth, taught in Ukrainian schools and promoted by Ukrainian academics. The two basic lies involve the "Holodomor" of the 1930s and Ukraine's "freedom fighters" — really, Nazi collaborators and mass murderers — during World War II.

The facts

The Holodomor, derived from "to kill by starvation," refers to the phony genocide by famine in the Soviet Ukraine. There never was any "Holodomor" or deliberate starvation of Ukrainians, or of anybody else in the Soviet Union (USSR). It's a lie disseminated by Ukrainian nationalists and fascists, with no historical evidence. The "Holodomor" myth was politically motivated from the start. It originated in the Ukrainian diaspora (Ukrainians living outside Ukraine), a population led by veterans of Ukrainian Nazi forces.

While the famine of 1932-33 took a terrible toll, it was only one of a long series of catastrophes. Russia and Ukraine had experienced famine every two to four years for a millennium — yes, for a thousand years, at least — and devastating famines every decade or so. There were serious famines in 1920-1923, 1924-5, 1927-8, and again in 1932-33.

The Soviet leadership, Joseph Stalin included, did not understand the extent of these famines for some time. No one did. When they finally realized it, they sent millions of tons of food and grain aid to Ukraine and to other regions of the USSR. They also sent tractors and “political departments” to organize agriculture. The result was a good harvest in 1933, which ended the famine.

About 10 percent of the population of Ukraine died from the 1932-33 famine, roughly the same percentage as in 1920-23. The 90 percent who survived brought home the harvest and stopped the famine — with significant Soviet aid.

Thanks to the collectivization of agriculture, which took place mainly in 1930-31, farming was reorganized on a large-scale and increasingly mechanized basis. Collectivization was the greatest humanitarian triumph of the 20th century. It put an end to the famines that had devastated Ukraine and Russia for a thousand years or more! (There was one more famine in the Soviet Union, in 1946-47. It was caused by the devastation of World War II plus the worst drought in centuries, and affected all of Europe and much of Asia. Even England had to institute bread rationing.) The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) were trained by Germany’s Nazis. They entered the USSR with Adolph Hitler’s troops and participated in mass murders of Jewish and Polish workers and communists. As many as 100,000 Polish civilians were slaughtered in 1943-44.

Stepan Bandera led the more hard-core fascist wing of the OUN and eventually consolidated control over Ukraine’s nationalist forces. He was deemed unreliable by the Nazis, who imprisoned him for a time. Then they let him out so he could fight the Red Army again. In 1941, the Banderist leadership declared an “independent” Ukraine state, which was in reality a satellite of Nazi Germany.

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army was formed in part from the 14th Waffen-SS Division (storm troopers) , an all-Western Ukrainian Nazi SS division. Lies and damned lies

In short, both of Ukraine’s foundational historical myths — or, more accurately, lies — have a Nazi origin. And both are taught as “truth” in today’s Ukraine by the Ukrainian government and its institutions!

Russian-speaking workers in eastern Ukraine are affected by these lies as well. But they also question them, and many reject them. As they should do. Now the open fascists are becoming prominent in the new Ukrainian government in Kiev. This isn’t surprising, since fascist lies have been officially propagated and taught in Ukraine for the past 15 to 20 years.

The question of grain exports

Like the pre-revolutionary Czarist regimes, the Soviet government exported grain. While the USSR was exporting it was also allocating much more grain to seed and famine relief. The government accumulated some three million tons in reserves during this period and then allocated two million tons from that to famine relief. Soviet archival sources indicate that the regime returned five million tons of grain from procurements back to villages throughout the USSR in the first half of 1933. This greatly exceeded the amount exported.

However, there was simply not enough food to feed the whole population, even if all exports had been stopped instead of just drastically curtailed, as they were. According to Professor Mark Tauger, the world expert on Russian and Soviet famines:

...[E]ven a complete cessation of exports would not have been enough to prevent famine. ... The harvest of 1932 essentially made a famine inevitable.

The Soviet government used these procurements to feed 40 million people in the cities and industrial sites who were also starving, further evidence that the harvest was small. About 10 percent of the population of Ukraine died from the famine or associated diseases. But 90 percent survived, the vast majority of whom were peasants, army men of peasant background or workers of peasant origin. The surviving peasants had to work very hard, under conditions of insufficient food, to sow and bring in the 1933 harvest. They did so with significant aid from the Soviet government.

The Soviet government's large-scale relief campaign which, together with their own hard work under the most difficult conditions, enabled the peasants to produce a large harvest in 1933. In Tauger's judgment:

[T]he general point [is that] the famine was caused by natural factors and that the government helped the peasants produce a larger harvest the next year and end the famine.

The so-called "Holodomor" or "deliberate" and "man-made" famine interpretation is not simply mistaken on some important points. Its proponents misrepresent history by omitting evidence that would undermine their interpretation. It is not history but political propaganda disguised as history.

Collective farm shock workers

- [Socialism and feminism: Collective farm shock workers](#)

Stalin and women: this conjunction usually evokes salacious details of Stalin's somewhat active life as a young man, leaving a number of offspring across Russia. But in this he was no different from many other young Georgian males. Far less known is the way he came to see, later in life, the importance of socialism for women. On many occasions, he addressed women's congresses, let alone framing the Constitution of the USSR (1936 revision) to address explicitly equality of the sexes...As the constitution was in its final stages of being formulated, Stalin addressed a gathering of collective farm women shock workers. His speeches at earlier women's congresses

may have been somewhat patronising, but here the issue of socialism and women gains clear expression.

### The Collectivisation Revolution

- [Making everything new: the collectivisation revolution:](#)

Some of the most fascinating material in Stalin's Works (from volume 11 onwards) concerns the theoretical debates over collectivisation. The campaign, of course, remains the butt of much anti-communist ranting, with assertions that it 'caused' the famines of the 1930s, that it curtailed the natural incentive of private property and farming, indeed that it was nothing more than a return to medieval patterns of indentured labour, if not outright slavery.

All of that avoids dealing seriously with the actual issues at stake. To begin with, the furious process of industrialisation in the 1920s had to do so in a new way. The USSR was unable to plunder colonies for industrialisation, as had happened in Western Europe, and it did not wish to rely on foreign loans (it pretty much couldn't anyway, since it had simply annulled the debts racked up by the tsarist autocracy). So the whole industrialisation process had to rely on internal, or socialist accumulation. Large-scale industrialisation needs massive injections of funds. But where to get those funds? The government decided to set higher prices for manufactured goods, as a type of super-tax that would flow back into industry. This was despite the increasing abundance of such goods. Meanwhile, prices on agricultural goods were set lower, even if there were occasional shortages. Obviously, this went directly counter to the supposed 'iron law' of supply and demand. Obviously, it led to not a little speculation by the kulaks, or wealthy farmers, among others. Most importantly, it produced the first layer of economic contradiction.

The second layer was between the rate of industrial change and the rate of agricultural change. The furious pace of industrialisation (the proverbial unleashing of productive forces) left agriculture far behind, so that an ever larger gulf opened up between them. The 'super-tax', or 'scissors' approach would not hold out forever in such a situation, so something had to be done in relation to agriculture. Stalin toyed with the idea that the small farmers should be fostered, since their approach had been tested over centuries. But in the end, he and the government opted for the very Left approach of collectivisation as a way of dealing with the growing contradiction between industry and agriculture.

As some have suggested, and as the editors of Stalin's Works also point out, the collectivisation drive was the most difficult task since the conquest of power. In short, it really was an other revolution, a massive undertaking never quite seen before, achieved in a breathtakingly short period of time and not without a few unexpected side-effects.

In this context, Stalin reflects on such revolutionary changes in a letter to Gorky from 1930. He is discussing the responses of young people to the turmoil:

It cannot be the case that now, when we are breaking the old relations in life and building new ones, when the customary roads and paths are being torn up and new, uncustomary ones laid, when whole sections of the population who used to live in plenty are being thrown out of their

rut and are falling out of the ranks, making way for millions of people who were formerly oppressed and downtrodden—it cannot be the case that the youth should represent a homogeneous mass of people who sympathise with us, that there should be no differentiation and division among them. Firstly, among the youth there are sons of wealthy parents. Secondly, even if we take the youth who are our own (in social status), not all of them have the hardiness, the strength, the character and the understanding to appreciate the picture of the tremendous break-up of the old and the feverish building of the new as a picture of something which has to be and which is therefore desirable, something, moreover, which has little resemblance to a heavenly idyll of “universal bliss” that is to afford everyone the opportunity of “taking his ease” and “basking in happiness.” Naturally, in such a “racking turmoil,” we are bound to have people who are weary, overwrought, worn-out, despairing, dropping out of the ranks and, lastly, deserting to the camp of the enemy. These are the unavoidable “overhead costs” of revolution (Works, vol. 12, p. 180).

### The Bible and Soviet Constitution

- [The Bible and Soviet Constitution: Stalin's Reinterpretation of 2 Thessalonians and Acts 4:](#)

...what does this mean in practice? It means people will be paid according to the labour they have provided. It means different pay scales (within reason) in terms of skills, type of labour, and contribution to the overall good of the socialist project. It also means that one should take responsibility for one's labour and stay in the same job for a while. This is far from the idea of 'equalitarianism', under which 'everybody would get the same pay, an equal quantity of meat and an equal quantity of bread, would wear the same clothes and receive the same goods in the same quantities—such a socialism is unknown to Marxism' (Stalin, Works, volume 13, p. 120).

Is communism different? In one respect it is, for this is the time when 'labour has been transformed from a means of subsistence into the prime want of man, into voluntary labour for society' (p. 121). Yet, communism is like socialism in that it does not fall into the trap of individualist equalitarianism in relation to labour. One provides labour according to ability and is given what one needs. Obviously, the abilities differ, as do the needs – depending on one stage in life, whether one has children or not, whether one is sick or healthy.

### The Value of the People

- [Try making a mare: Stalin on the value of people:](#)

In the midst of the foi furieuse of the Stakhanovite period, when everything was being made anew at extraordinary speed (and with massive disruption), the government of the USSR felt keenly the lack of trained specialist in all areas of work...A slightly different image of the man who is charged with callously slaughtering millions, drooling while doing so. A little later, in an address to graduates from the Red Army training centre, he tells this famous story to illustrate his point.

## Interview with H.G. Wells in 1934

- [Stalin's interview with H. G. Wells:](#)

In 1934, H. G. Wells travelled to the USSR to interview Stalin. A few delightful snippets from that interview:

Wells: Now I have come to ask you what you are doing to change the world ...

Stalin: Not so very much...

Stalin: You, Mr. Wells, evidently start out with the assumption that all men are good. I, however, do not forget that there are many wicked men.

Wells: I cannot yet appreciate what has been done in your country; I only arrived yesterday. But I have already seen the happy faces of healthy men and women and I know that something very considerable is being done here. The contrast with 1920 is astounding.

Stalin: Much more could have been done had we Bolsheviks been cleverer.

Wells: No, if human beings were cleverer. It would be a good thing to invent a five-year plan for the reconstruction of the human brain which obviously lacks many things needed for a perfect social order. (Laughter.)

## Vision of a future commune

- [A vision of the future commune:](#)

Did Stalin have an idea to which the USSR was striving? It may be called the vision of the future commune, based on the massive collectivisation drive of the late 1920s and 1930s. In between the lines, we may catch a glimpse of the idea that communism is a state of becoming rather than being, although he does tend to the latter.

The future communes will arise out of developed and prosperous artels. The future agricultural commune will arise when the fields and farms of the artel have an abundance of grain, cattle, poultry, vegetables, and all other produce; when the artels have mechanised laundries, modern kitchens and dining-rooms, mechanised bakeries, etc.; when the collective farmer sees that it is more to his advantage to get meat and milk from the collective farm's meat and dairy department than to keep his own cow and small livestock; when the woman collective farmer sees that it is more to her advantage to take her meals in the dining-room, to get her bread from the public bakery, and to have her linen washed in the public laundry, than to do all these things herself. The future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technique and of a more developed artel, on the basis of an abundance of products. When will that be? Not soon, of course. But it will take place. (Works, vol. 13, p. 360).

## Natural Disaster and Human Actions in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1933

- Mark B. Tauger, [\*Natural Disaster and Human Actions in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1933\*](#)

## The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933

- Mark B. Tauger, [\*The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933\*](#)

## Fraud, Famine, and Fascism

- Douglas Tottle, [\*Fraud, Famine, and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard\*](#)

## The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933

- R. W. Davies, Stephen G. Wheatcroft, [\*The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia Volume 5: The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933\*](#)

## Blood Lies: The Evidence that Every Accusation against Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union in Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands Is False

- Grover Furr, [\*Blood Lies: The Evidence that Every Accusation against Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union in Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands Is False\*](#)

## Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution

- Robert C. Allen, [\*Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution\*](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/collectivization>

# Soviet Affirmative Action

- [\*Soviet Affirmative Action: The Harvard Interview Project of 1950-51:\*](#)

I have commented a number of times on one of the deep paradoxes of Stalin's era in the Soviet Union: he was in many respects the architect of the world's first and – until now – most ambitious and far-reaching affirmative action program. I have now read carefully Terry Martin's *The Affirmative Action Empire*. This is a 500 page book, peerless in its use of archival material and chock full of insights. It has its shortcomings, especially in the theoretical area, thereby missing some of the complexities and dialectical tensions at work. All the same, he argues persuasively that the Soviet Union was not a nation-state, not a federation, nor indeed an empire (despite the title). Instead, its 'imagined community' was the friendship of the peoples, or 'international nationalism'. (As someone suggested to me recently, China too is a new form of the state, developing further the experience of the Soviet Union.) What Martin does not do is use



this to develop a Marxist theory of the state based on actual practice, but then he is not so interested in Marxist theory.

Let me return to the question of affirmative action, for not a few will be a little sceptical: sure, the Soviet government may have made many statements concerning affirmative action, and Stalin may have made many speeches to that effect and even shaped the 1936 constitution, but what about actual experiences? What happened on the ground? An extraordinary amount, as Martin shows. One small example comes from the Harvard Interview Project of 1950-51, which interviewed displaced persons – 250 Ukrainians, Belorussians and Russians – after the Second World War, from Smolensk and Leningrad.

The interviewers did not ask direct questions concerning ethnic conflict. Instead, they asked respondents to list the ‘distinguishing characteristics’ of Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Kalmyks and Tatars. To the astonishment of the interviewers, many of the respondents replied that there were no ethnic differences whatsoever. The interviewers pressed their case, but the respondents (as Martin points out) determined that there were two very different issues at stake. First, did the Soviet government treat nationalities differently, even persecuting them as the Nazis did? The responses: ‘Politically and in living standards, no. In national customs, yes’; ‘Yes, the Jews have the first place in the Soviet Union’. Second, the respondents inferred an interest by the interviewers in popular prejudice in the Soviet Union. In response: ‘Yes, of course there are [national differences]. But the nationalities are not enemies because of that’; ‘But that does not mean there are necessarily antagonistic feelings between us’.

Even more, many of the respondents connected the absence of popular prejudice and conflict to state policy. In response to the question concerning ‘distinguishing characteristics’, a dozen respondents asserted that the absence of open national prejudice was due to the very severe punishments for racial-hate speech. The responses are worth noting:

No, that is impossible. Everyone must love everyone in the Soviet Union ... It is against the law to have national animosities.

There is no chauvinism. You can get ten years for it.

In the army, a soldier got seven years for calling a Jew ‘Zhid.’

All are alike. You cannot tell somebody that he is a Ukrainian and brag that you are a Russian or you would be arrested.

It is strictly forbidden by law to offend any member of any nationality, regardless of whether he is a Russian, Ukrainian, White Russian, or anything else.

If you cussed out a member of a minority group, there was serious trouble.

If you call a Jew a ‘zhid’, he can go to the police and you will get a prison sentence.

A primary school teacher told a personal story of how she had used a Russian proverb, 'An untimely guest is worse than a Tatar', and almost lost her job.

Martin observes, 'When one considers that the interviewers neither asked about national prejudice nor about state policy, these spontaneous responses are impressive testimony to the success of the Soviet campaigns against great power chauvinism and in favor of internationalism and friendship among the Soviet peoples' (p. 390).

What about the 1936 'Stalin' constitution's guarantee of national equality for all peoples? How did respondents see it? They initially opined that it was a complete fraud and not worth the paper on which it was written, but then pointed out, 'correct', this guarantee is observed; 'in this case there is no conflict between the text of the constitution and reality'; 'all nations have the same rights'. What a contrast with Russia now.

Bear in mind that these positions were also voiced in the context of immediate memories of Nazi racial theory and practice. And that they arose from the same period as the extensive purges of the 1930s – part of my investigation of the practical contributions to a materialist doctrine of evil, if not a thorough revision of Marxist theories of human nature.

- [Debunking Stalin's 'Anti-Semitism'](#):

The accusation that Stalin was an anti-Semite is a strange one. Neither Stalin's written texts nor his actions indicate anti-Semitism. Indeed, they indicate precisely the opposite, as I will show in a moment. So those who wish to make the accusation have to rely on hearsay – second- and third-hand snippets from passing conversations, whether from an estranged daughter or from those within and without the USSR who were not favourably disposed to Stalin.[1] And once such a position is 'established', it is then possible to read some of his actions and written comments in such a light. For instance, the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign of the late 1940s becomes a coded 'anti-Semitic' campaign. Or the 'doctors plot' of 1952-53 – in which leading doctors were suspected of seeking to assassinate government officials – is seen as an excuse for a widespread anti-Semitic purge and deportation,[2] halted only because of Stalin's death (we may thank Khrushchev for this piece of speculation). However, the only way such an assumption can work is that many doctors in the Soviet Union were Jewish; therefore the attack on doctors was anti-Semitic. Equally, even more doctors were Russian, but for some strange reason, the plot is not described as anti-Russian.

Unfortunately for Stalin's accusers, even the hearsay indicates that Stalin was opposed to the deep-rooted anti-Semitism of Russian culture. During the anti-cosmopolitan campaign of 1948-49 – which was actually anti-capitalist in the wake of the Second World War – it became the practice in some journal articles to include, where possible, the original family names in brackets after the Russian name. Sometimes, such original names were Jewish. When Stalin noticed this he commented:

Why Mal'tsev, and then Rovinskii between brackets? What's the matter here? How long will this continue ...? If a man chose a literary pseudonym for himself, it's his right.... But apparently

someone is glad to emphasise that this person has a double surname, to emphasise that he is a Jew.... Why create anti-Semitism?[3]

Indeed, to the Romanian leader, Gheorghiu-Dej, Stalin commented pointedly in 1947, 'racism leads to fascism'.[4] At this point, we face an extraordinary contradiction: those who would accuse Stalin of anti-Semitism must dismiss his deep antipathy to fascism and deploy the *reductio ad Hitlerum*. If one assumes, even subconsciously, that Hitler and Stalin were of the same ilk, then it follows that Stalin too must be an anti-Semite. Apart from the sheer oxymoron of an anti-fascist fascist, this assertion seems very much like the speculative thought bubble that becomes 'true' through a thousand repetitions.[5]

I prefer to follow a rather conventional approach, instead of relying on hearsay, gossip and speculation. That approach is to pay attention to his written statements and actions. These are rather telling. Already in 'Marxism and the National Question' (1913), in which Stalin deals extensively with the Jews and the Bund (The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), he points out that dispersed minorities such as the Jews would be given the full range of protections, in terms of language, education, culture and freedom of conscience, within a socialist state. This would become his standard position, reiterated time and again and contrasted with the tsarist autocracy's fostering of pogroms.[6] It was also reflected in extensive programs among Jews, including the fostering – not without problems and failures – of Yiddish, Jewish institutions and the significant presence of Jews at all levels of government.[7]

From time to time, Stalin had to deal with outbursts of anti-Semitism that still ran deep in Russian culture (thanks to the residual influence of tsarist autocracy). For example, in 1927 he explicitly mentions that any traces of anti-Semitism, even among workers and in the party is an 'evil' that 'must be combated, comrades, with all ruthlessness'.[8] And in 1931, in response to a question from the Jewish News Agency in the United States, he describes anti-Semitism as an 'an extreme form of racial chauvinism' that is a convenient tool used by exploiters to divert workers from the struggle with capitalism. Communists, therefore, 'cannot but be irreconcilable, sworn enemies of anti-semitism'. Indeed, in the U.S.S.R. 'anti-semitism is punishable with the utmost severity of the law as a phenomenon deeply hostile to the Soviet system'. Active 'anti-semites are liable to the death penalty'.[9]

This was no empty boast, as those who accuse Stalin of anti-semitism seem to assume. It is worth noting that article 123 of the 1936 Constitution ensured that this position was law.[10] Active anti-Semitism, even racial slurs, were severely punished. It may be surprising to some, but one of the key tasks of the NKVD (precursor to the KGB) was to counteract waves of residual anti-Semitism.[11] Yes, one of the jobs of the infamous secret police of the USSR was to root out anti-Semitism.

Further, the 'affirmative action' program of the Soviet Union,[12] enacted in Stalin's capacity as Commissar for Nationality Affairs (1917-24), was explicitly a program in which territories of identifiable ethnic minorities were established, with their own languages and forms of education, the fostering of literature and cultural expression, and local forms of governance. As for dispersed minorities, even within such regions, they were provided with a stiff framework of protections, including strong penalties for any form of racial denigration and abuse. Already in

1913 Stalin had prefigured such an approach, specifying among others ‘the Jews in Poland, the Letts in Lithuania, the Russians in the Caucasus, the Poles in the Ukraine, and so on’.[13] They too – in a program of indigenization (korenizatsiia)[14] – should be able to use their own languages, operate their own schools, law-courts and soviets, and have freedom of conscience in matters relating to religion. Indeed, by the mid-1930s the Jews too were identified as a ‘nation’ with territory, having the Jewish Autonomous district in Birobidzhan.[15] This importance of this move (part of Crimea had also been proposed) is rarely recognised. It eventually failed, but it was the first move towards Jewish territory in the modern era.[16]

A final question: what about the attacks on Judaism as a religion? In 1913, Stalin wrote of the ‘petrified religious rites and fading psychological relics’[17] fostered by pockets of the ‘clerical-reactionary Jewish community’.[18] Is this anti-Semitic? No, it is anti-religious. Judaism too was subject anti-religious campaigns, which had the result not so much of divorcing Jews from their religious ‘roots’ but of producing a profound transformation in Jewish institutions and culture, so much so that one can speak of a ‘sovietisation’ of Jewish culture that produced Jews who were not religious but proud of contributions to Soviet society.[19]

What are we to make of all this? Do the hearsay and implicit assumptions speak the truth, or do Stalin’s words and actions speak the truth? I prefer the latter. But if we are to give some credence to the hearsay, then it may indicate a profoundly personal struggle for a Georgian, who was brought up with an ingrained anti-Semitism, to root it out in the name of socialism.

...Korenizatsiia, a term coined by the Bolsheviks, is ‘derived directly not from the stem koren- (“root”—with the meaning “rooting”) but from its adjectival form korennoi as used in the phrase korennoi narod (indigenous people)’

- [The world’s first affirmative action constitution:](#)

It was of course the constitution of the USSR. The constitution of 1924 contains this crucial declaration, indicating that one of the key factors involved ethnic diversity (or what it likes to call the ‘national question’):

The will of the peoples of the Soviet republics, who recently assembled at their Congresses of Soviets and unanimously resolved to form a “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” is a reliable guarantee that this Union is a voluntary association of peoples enjoying equal rights, that each republic is guaranteed the right of freely seceding from the Union, that admission to the Union is open to all Socialist Soviet Republics, whether now existing or hereafter to arise, that the new union state will prove to be a worthy crown to the foundation for the peaceful co-existence and fraternal co-operation of the peoples that was laid in October 1917, and that it will serve as a sure bulwark against world capitalism and as a new and decisive step towards the union of the working people of all countries into a World Socialist Soviet Republic (Stalin, Works 5, p. 404).

A constitution is always a work in progress, so the 1936 version (sponsored by Stalin) extended affirmative action to women, religion, education and so on:

Article 122. Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. The possibility of exercising these rights is ensured to women by granting them an equal right with men to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and by state protection of the interests of mother and child, prematernity and maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens.

Article 123. Equality of rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life, is an indefeasible law. Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for, citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.

Article 124. In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.

Incidentally, article 124, which Stalin included in the face of stiff opposition, eventually led to the rapprochement between Stalin and the church during and after the Second World War. The church petitioned for churches to be re-opened, religious personnel to be admitted to jobs, and religious candidates ran in the 1937 legislative elections.

By 1977, the revised constitution summed up the affirmative action position as follows:

Article 34. Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile, or other status.

The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social, and cultural life.

Article 35. Women and men have equal rights in the USSR.

Exercise of these rights is ensured by according women equal access with men to education and vocational and professional training, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration, and promotion, and in social and political, and cultural activity, and by special labour and health protection measures for women; by providing conditions enabling mothers to work; by legal protection, and material and moral support for mothers and children, including paid leaves and other benefits for expectant mothers and mothers, and gradual reduction of working time for mothers with small children.

Article 36. Citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights.

Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet

patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native language and the languages of other peoples in the USSR.

Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility, or contempt, are punishable by law.

Needless to say, constitutions express certain ideals that are not always practised in reality, but in its initial articulation it was the first affirmative action constitution in the world.

- [Stalin on fascism and racism:](#)

Earlier, I posted about Stalin's strong stand against anti-semitism and the tough penalties for any form of racial abuse in the USSR. Here is another piece. In his report to the seventeenth congress of the CPSU(B), Stalin once again comments on fascism, in the context of Hitler's recent seizure of power in Germany.

Still others think that war should be organised by a "superior race," say, the German "race," against an "inferior race," primarily against the Slavs; that only such a war can provide a way out of the situation, for it is the mission of the "superior race" to render the "inferior race" fruitful and to rule over it. Let us assume that this queer theory, which is as far removed from science as the sky from the earth, let us assume that this queer theory is put into practice. What may be the result of that?

It is well known that ancient Rome looked upon the ancestors of the present-day Germans and French in the same way as the representatives of the "superior race" now look upon the Slav races. It is well known that ancient Rome treated them as an "inferior race," as "barbarians," destined to live in eternal subordination to the "superior race," to "great Rome", and, between ourselves be it said, ancient Rome had some grounds for this, which cannot be said of the representatives of the "superior race" of today. (Thunderous applause.) But what was the upshot of this? The upshot was that the non-Romans, i.e., all the "barbarians," united against the common enemy and brought Rome down with a crash. The question arises: What guarantee is there that the claims of the representatives of the "superior race" of today will not lead to the same lamentable results? What guarantee is there that the fascist literary politicians in Berlin will be more fortunate than the old and experienced conquerors in Rome? Would it not be more correct to assume that the opposite will be the case? (Works, volume 13, p. 302).

- [What was the Soviet Union?:](#)

...It is becoming clearer in some of the more astute research that the Soviet Union was not a federation, not an empire, not a colonising power, not a nation-state, but an entirely new state formation...A federation assumes disparate groups that then slowly merge together to form a state, like the United States or Switzerland. The catch with the situation in the Soviet Union was that such disparate groups did not exist, except for a brief time after the 'civil' war that followed the October Revolution. There are many still who like to apply the term 'empire' or 'colonial power' to the USSR, since these are known frameworks. Thus, it sought to impose its imperial

will on subject peoples much like the tsarist autocracy that it overthrew, if not seek world domination; or it exploited the ‘border lands’ for the sake of raw material and was therefore a colonial power. But these do not get us very far. The Soviet government was extraordinarily careful to avoid replicating the patterns of the tsarist empire, which involved suppressing the many nationalities that made up the Soviet Union. Instead, they fostered the diversity of the cultures, languages and forms of governance of these nationalities (with the exception of some ‘enemy nationalities’ during the Second World War, who opted out of the project and toyed with aiding the enemy – they were, of course relocated). As for colonialism, the Soviets actually supported anti-colonial movements around the world, coming to see the October Revolution as in many respects also an anti-colonial revolution, especially among the various national groups within what became the USSR. For them, particularly the Belorussians, Latvians and Georgians, nationalism was a positive movement and was seen as one with the socialist project.

A nation-state is impossible to think now without Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ argument. But in the intense debates among socialists (German and Austrian Marxists such as Karl Kautsky, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer; the members of the Bund, the Jewish Workers Party, and the Bolsheviks) in the early twentieth century, ‘nation’ meant not the nation-state but what might now be called ‘ethnic minorities’. However, the problem with that term is that the nations in question were not predicated on ethnicity and they included both minority and majority nations. In order to get away from the traps of using the term ‘nation’, it is perhaps better to use the term ‘nationality’. Indeed, in the Chinese context, this term is still used: *minzu*. In light of this situation, the Soviet Union itself was not a nationality, not a nation, and not a nation-state.

So what was it? The terms they used to describe the Soviet Union are instructive. They preferred to speak of the ‘Land of the Soviets’, the ‘Soviet people’ and even the ‘Soviet Motherland’. The favoured term of the 1936 Stalin Constitution was ‘friendship of the peoples’. For Terry Martin, this was the ‘imagined community’ of the Soviet Union. But I would like to go one step further and suggest that the Soviet Union was not a nation-state but a multi-national socialist state. In this way it provides one model as to how a socialist state formation might develop. The fact that this model deeply influenced China in the 1950s also suggests that China has also developed into a multi-national state, albeit with its own inflections since then.

- [Cultural revolution as the pentecost of languages and peoples:](#)

We are perhaps most used to the Cultural Revolution in relation to China – the extraordinary decade of revolutionary upheaval that is still to be fully assessed for its drawbacks and benefits. However, the term ‘cultural revolution’ actually goes back to Lenin and Stalin, where it has a distinct meaning. For Stalin, cultural revolution is a Leninist slogan which designates raising the cultural level of workers and peasants:

Therefore, the cultural development of the working class and of the masses of the working peasantry, not only the development of literacy, although literacy is the basis of all culture, but primarily the cultivation of the ability to take part in the administration of the country, is the chief lever for improving the state and every other apparatus. This is the sense and significance of Lenin’s slogan about the cultural revolution (Works, vol. 10, pp. 330-31).

This approach to cultural revolution took on a whole new dimension when it became part of the affirmative action program of the USSR – or what was called the ‘national question’. In this case, cultural revolution meant raising and transformation the cultures of the many minorities in the USSR. Often this involved creating literate cultures where none existed before. Scripts were created, grammars written, people taught for the first time to read and write their own language, literature written, and a new intellectual and political leadership fostered. The affirmative action program also included strict punishments for racist statements and acts for scattered minorities – which included the Jews.

All of this was predicated on the core socialist idea that the party and then the government should foster rather than repress different languages and cultures. Indeed, the ‘national question’ was in many ways structured and determined by the issue of language.

Let me put it in terms of the biblical stories of Babel and Pentecost (Genesis 11 and Acts). For Babel, linguistic unity is desired and multiplicity a seeming curse; for Pentecost unity is the source of unexpected diversity.

Or in a little more detail: in Genesis, we find that initially ‘the whole earth had one language and the same words’ (Gen 11:1). Soon enough, the human effort to build a city with a tower into the heavens makes God realise the immense potential of human power. In response, God confuses human language and scatters people over the face of the earth (confusion and scattering are repeated time and again through the story, as though providing formal confirmation of the content). The account of Pentecost in Acts 2 may seem to provide a long-range resolution of this confusion of tongues. Here, the multiplicity of tongues, ‘as of fire’, appearing on the heads of the apostles, enables a united understanding of the new gospel of Christ. Multiplicity is therefore a way of understanding the same message, which may be spoken in many tongues. However, Acts has a dialectical kick: the unitary drive of the Holy Spirit, like the rush of a mighty wind, produces diversity. The result is ‘differentiated tongues’, ‘other languages’, people from ‘every nation under heaven’ hearing the apostles speak in their ‘native language’ – Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs (the care with the list manifests less comprehensiveness than sheer diversity).

With this outline of the main tensions between Genesis 11 and Acts 2 in mind, it becomes possible to map different language policies and proposals (and indeed discover some surprising alliances). One cluster of such policies may be described as Babelian, or rather pre-Babelian. The desire is for one language, which existed before the divinely instigated confusion of tongues and scattering of peoples. Such a desire is predicated on the assumption that multiple languages are signs of the Fall, with Genesis 11 understood as yet another Fall story, or at least another facet of the story of the Fall that begins in Genesis 3. Far better is a universal language that would overcome the strife and discord of many tongues. Those who have pursued variations on this approach make for some strange occupiers of the same bed: Walter Benjamin’s search for the perfect, Adamic language that does not seek to communicate; the proponents of Esperanto; tsarist policy makers afraid of native languages and their connections with separatism; the Nazi refusal to acknowledge minority languages in Germany and Austria – such as the Sorbians and



Slovene Carinthians; and indeed ‘assimilation’ policies around the globe even today, in which immigrants are supposed to meld into the national culture through language.

So what is Stalin’s position? It is clearly a Pentecostal one. The socialist affirmative action program actually produced more languages:

Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little-known nationalities (Works, vol. 10, p. 141).

Indeed, it led to the creation of new ‘regenerated nations’, that is, ‘new, socialist nations, which have arisen on the ruins of the old nations and are led by the internationalist party of the labouring masses’ (Works, vol. 11, p. 369).

This is nothing less than a Pentecost of languages and peoples. Socialists are clearly Pentecostalists, in in favour of multiplicity and diversity.

But how did these languages, cultures and peoples achieve such a regenerated state? Through a cultural revolution:

In view of this, the Party considered it necessary to help the regenerated nations of our country to rise to their feet and attain their full stature, to revive and develop their national cultures, widely to develop schools, theatres and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages (Works, vol. 11, p. 369).

Or in more detail, for anyone who is serious about cultural revolution:

What is needed is to cover the country with an extensive network of schools functioning in the native languages, and to supply them with staffs of teachers who know the native languages.

What is needed is to nationalise—that is, to staff with members of the given nation—all the administrative apparatus, from Party and trade-union to state and economic.

What is needed is widely to develop the press, the theatre, the cinema and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages.

Why in the native languages?—it may be asked. Because only in their native, national languages can the vast masses of the people be successful in cultural, political and economic development (Works, vol 11, p. 370).

Cultural revolution is therefore the Pentecost of languages and peoples. The result is that the message may be heard in ‘differentiated tongues’, ‘other languages’, with people from ‘every nation under heaven’ hearing the message in their ‘native language’. As for how many languages Stalin knew, that is still a matter of debate.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/affirmativeaction>

## 1991 Referendum on preserving the USSR

- [graphic of votes](#)
- [The Soviet referendum: Setback for the counterrevolution by Sam Marcy in March 1991](#)
- [results of referendum](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/1991referendum>

## The Soviet Union and the Korean Peninsula

- Anna Louis Strong, [In North Korea: First Eye-Witness Report](#), 1949.
- DPRK?, [Modern Korea: The Socialist North, Revolutionary Perspectives in the South, and Unification](#), 1970.
- DPRK, [The Historical Experience of the Agrarian Reform in Our Country](#), 1974.
- DPRK?, [North Korean Journey: The Revolution Against Colonialism](#), 1975.
- DPRK, [Modern History of Korea](#), 1979.
- LeftistCritic, [Elections in the Socialist Motherland: Democracy in the DPRK](#), 2017.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/ussrandkorea>

## The Soviet Union and Syria

- Jörg Michael Dostal, [Post-independence Syria and the Great Powers \(1946-1958\): How Western Power Politics Pushed the Country Toward the Soviet Union](#), 2014.

More articles will be added later.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/ussrandsyria>

## The Soviet Union, Cuba, and African Liberation

- [The Soviets and Zimbabwe's liberation](#)
- [The Soviet Union, Cuba, and African liberation](#)
- [From the National Question to the International Question: The Soviet contribution to the anti-colonial struggle](#), 2015.
- [Cubans love Russian classics, Soviet cinema, says deputy minister of culture](#), 2018.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/ussrliberation>

## The Soviet Union and Zimbabwe's liberation

- "The following year [1958], as the record shows, Nkomo began his contact with the Soviets, which would prove as a major force in the liberation struggle to come...Nkomo was imprisoned and official Black opposition banned in 1962 by the white colonialist government. The Soviets played a major helping hand in this liberation struggle, giving massive support for Zapu, which made its first contact with them through the ANC in South Africa, with the Soviets continuing their opposition to the settler government in Zimbabwe at major international forums time and time again, with Nkomo and other top leaders went on troops worldwide in an effort to garner international support...Zapu representatives went to a number of socialist countries, still supported by the Soviets, and based in Zambia with the military wing of ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army)...Simply put, Zanu, later led by Mugabe, had a pro-China leaning while Zapu, led by Nkomo, had a pro-Soviet leaning...This manifestation of the Sino-Soviet split, begun in part by Nikita Khrushchev's traitorous "Secret Speech" denouncing the supposed "wrongs" of Joseph Stalin, meant that China determined more of the direction of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle than the Soviets...As a result of Chinese support, Zanu was transformed from a splinter organization into a full-fledged participant of the liberation struggle, and it became more bold, criticizing the alliance of the Soviet-aligned ANC and Zapu, saying this allowed racists to consolidate their forces...China, for their part, was active in aiding liberation in the country, seeing as a way to counter "Soviet hegemonism" and "Sovietism" with their support as part of their anti-superpower and anti-Soviet agenda. hilariously, this was misread by the White apartheid government as a way to get Western capitalists and China to work together and fight the Soviets, but the Chinese would have no part in such an "agreement"...The Soviets still backed the moderate Nkomo over Mugabe, who was more radical and Marxist. This was partially due to Mugabe's call to run his own organization while Nkomo was willing to rely on aid from the Cubans and Soviets. The Soviets also felt this aid was important since they saw China's aid in this struggle as "hostile" even if that meant supporting someone less radical. It is also worth pointing out that that despite Cuba's support for Zapu broadly, they did help the military wing of Zanu, which also received military training in Mozambique. This shows yet again that Cuba is not some "Soviet satellite," as ignorant bourgeois commentators will bark...It is worth pointing out that despite charges that Zapu was some US-backed organ because of their reported skepticism of "accepted" liberation organizations in Southern Africa, the publication criticized Moscow, said that the Soviets were collaborating with US imperialism, criticized ANC for being pacifist, took a Black Power stand, promoted those such as H. Rap Brown, and frequently cited Mao Zedong, along with pronouncements of African socialism...It is also worth pointing out that China funded the Pan-African Congress while the Soviets supported the African National Congress in South Africa...In earlier years, the Chinese trained and sent armed to Zapu, but this changed after the Sino-Soviet split came into full force in the later 1960s...one Zapu guerrilla told a Zimbabwean court in 1968 that in the Soviet Union, guerrillas had classes lasting four months on a wide range of topics including "political science, aspects of intelligence work...use of codes and ciphers." and given a rundown on work of "the CIA, MI6 and MI5, and the French and Federal German intelligence organisations" along

with being taught how to use “explosives, hand-grenades, and how to use and assemble guns, rifles and pistols.”- As argued by [LeftistCritic](#)

- "Internationally, the Sino-Soviet split continued to manifest itself. As Zanu and the ANC were close to the Soviet Union, Zanu was supported by Beijing, allowing the revolutionary group to prosecute a war of liberation, with Chinese aid as a contributing factor to victory...The White settler-apartheid government described how Zanu guerrillas had been trained in Moscow (and across the Soviet Union)...When Mugabe tried to approach the Soviets and their allies to ask for aid, especially since the aid went to a trickle after Western reformist Deng Xiaoping took power, allying more with the US, leaving the “Third World” behind in the dust...Again and again, he was rebuffed, with “East Germany” calling them a “splinter group,” showing they did not understand liberation movement, leading to an anti-Soviet attitude among Zanu, with open clashes with Zanu cadres, and Mugabe accusing the Soviets of giving aid as to make others their puppets...This belief was reinforced by the fact that not only the situation in Angola was different than Zimbabwe but the Soviets said that they would support him if he separated from China and stopped calling himself a Maoist while they continued to support Nkomo who was a leader that the Western business community and White Zimbabweans wanted to win the liberation struggle because he was more moderate...In the later 1970s, Zanu continued to receive Soviet support. Even as the Soviets began to “warm up” to Mugabe, who visited the Soviet Union in 1978, they remained loyal to Nkomo. They sent Zanu heavy weapons, fearing that helping Mugabe would ultimately assist “Chinese interests” as they worked to undermine Western and Chinese influence in the region by supporting the “bourgeois nationalist” Nkomo instead of Mugabe, who was more radical! On the international stage, Zanu had more ability to spread their propaganda...in Southern Africa, the Soviets had gained an advantage with a favorable Marxist government in Angola controlled by the MPLA, while the main Chinese involvement was in Zimbabwe where they had close links to Mugabe and Zanu...Nkomo having thousands of men armed with armored vehicles and MiG fighters in Zambia, disregarding the advice of his socialist (Soviet, Cuban, and East German) advisers by continuing the war. Ultimately, he, like Mugabe, was forced to accept negotiated terms of the Lancaster Agreement...Mugabe tried to create a socially democratic state, rather than a socialist one, helping the Chinese gain markets for their companies. This policy, expanded to socialist nations, resulting in the USSR established an embassy in Zimbabwe in 1981, but was encouraged by the Chinese revisionists, under Deng Xiaoping (Chinese leader from 1978 to 1989), encouraging Mugabe to not follow Mao’s model of Chinese socialism, engaging in market measures again...This did not mean that the country was a Chinese colony, but rather that it within the sphere of influence of the Chinese revisionists, which likely angered the Soviets even though they were partially revisionist themselves since the Khrushchev years...Even Margaret Thatcher told Mikhail Gorbachev, the person who was a biggest cause of the Soviet Union’s dissolution due to his market-friendly policies, making the Western capitalist class smile with glee, that there needed to be a settlement in South Africa.”- As noted by [LeftistCritic](#)
- "In March 2002, Jonathan Moyo, then the Information Minister, said that the demise of the Soviet Union caused the “current image crisis” of the country since, in his view, global scrutiny of Zimbabwe began with the “end of the bipolar world order” and beginning of a unipolar world order by extension.”- As noted by [LeftistCritic](#)

## The Soviet Union, Cuba, and African liberation

As noted in posts by LeftistCritic.

- "As Fidel Castro said in a 1961 interview, the revolution was a socialist one, and that imperialism can "choose between suicide and natural death. If it attacks, it means suicide, a fast and certain death. If it does not attack, it can hope to last a little longer." In the interview, Fidel also said that they destroyed "a tyrannical system...the philoimperialist bourgeois state apparatus...there is no longer anything good we can expect from the national bourgeoisie as a class...the socialist camp [he talks about Soviet Union and Czech Republic]...are our friends"...Not only did the future seem to have a revolutionary tone after the Cuban revolution, but the Soviet Union championed itself as "Cuba's protector"...As Lance Selfa puts it, Kennedy brought the world the closest it has been to "global holocaust," and holding the world hostage for over two weeks after which Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union agreed to remove nuclear missiles from Cuba. This irrationality is obvious in the fact that American leaders, namely Kennedy and his advisers, "were prepared to place millions of American lives at risk" so they could maneuver against the Soviet Union...in a 1962 presentation almost echoing Colin Powell's presentation to the UN Security Council before the Iraq war in 2003, with pictures of the missiles held by a US delegation, Adlai Stevenson declared that there were Russian nuclear missiles in Cuba, that the Soviets were at fault and covered stuff up, but that the United States isn't, but he clearly left out that "the United States had placed nuclear missiles in Turkey that were pointed at the Soviet Union"...Most famously, there was the imposition of a blockade. Even the U.S. intelligence community admitted that a blockade itself would not "bring down the Castro regime" and discussed how the Soviets, would in their conception, "exert strong pressures elsewhere to end the blockade," and that an invasion by the U.S. would lead to "retaliatory actions outside Cuba" by the Soviets, but that they would not provoke conflict...As a result of this illegal meddling of a terroristic nature, it is not surprising that the Cubans thought that Operation Mongoose was a forerunner to invasion by the United States, which is why they requested Soviet missiles in Cuba, leading to the Cuban missile crisis...The Cubans were haunted by the "threat of a U.S. military attack on Cuba...throughout the 1960s" and the Soviets were not always receptive to help, even opposing Cuba's "support for guerrilla movements in Latin America." Even the departure of Nikita Khrushchev because of his agreement to take missiles out of Cuba, which he placed there because he believed that US invasion was imminent, this did not assuage the doubts of leaders about "Soviet steadfastness in the defense of Cuba"...In 1968, when talking with officials of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), often called East Germany in the West, Fidel Castro told them that while they had a "guarantee against imperialist aggression" with Soviet military divisions to defend them, that Cuba has "no guarantee against imperialist aggression" and that while the Soviets have given them weapons, which they were thankful for, "if the imperialists attack Cuba, we can count only on ourselves"... Cuba faced an economic

slump, possibly because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and now “remains cash-strapped and now produces few films”...Sadly, because an early manifestation of the Sino-Soviet split, with both countries “vying to support the Cuban revolution” and some Communist Party USA members not liking Williams because he was talking about race, instead of class, the Williams family left Cuba and went to China instead, partially because of this as well...in September 1964, FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front), the movement that aimed to free Mozambique from Portuguese colonial domination, launched its guerrilla war from bases in Southern Tanzania, with the country of Tanzania becoming the rear guard for this anti-colonial force and “the major conduit of Soviet and Chinese weapons for them”...the Cubans made the decision to train African liberation independently of the Chinese or the Soviets, only asking for “Nyerere’s approval before going to Zaire”...Gleijeses argues that the Soviets branded Che as pro-Chinese for his wariness of Moscow’s foreign policy and criticism of the Soviet Union that he saw; Raul had a pro-Soviet view while Fidel was less of a harsh critic of the Soviets than Che, but distanced himself from the Chinese and declared at one point that Cuba should not be a Soviet (or Chinese) satellite and should be an independent socialist nation...some, such as Fidel, agreed in principle, but engaged in criticisms of the Soviets, in his speeches, that were indirect...FRELIMO, which had received aid from the Soviets, Cubans, and East Germans was attacked by a military group, backed by South Africa’s apartheid government, called RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance), “which feared a socialist blockade of its borders”...Also by 1981, the [Mozambique] government developed ties with...the Soviets who are active in meteorology, mining, and fisheries...even in 1981, Mozambique was “not a Soviet satellite” but did receive more Soviet assistance than Chinese assistance...in December 1976, the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army (Derg) government which embraced communism as an ideology, signed an aid agreement with the Soviets and Cuba sent a military mission, which at minimum seems to have betrayed the working class of Ethiopia or at least had problems fulfilling its goals... this government continued sparing with the US, signed another aid agreement with the Soviets and more Cuban technicians came...As years went on, the Derg didn’t tolerate Soviet or even Cuban interference “in domestic matters” balking at diplomacy by both countries to solve “the Eritrean and Ogaden conflicts” or to make “amends with its civilian leftist opposition” which resulted in the Cuban ambassador being asked to leave the country...Some claim that Derg turned to the Soviets and the Cubans because it was convenient and that Derg sent people to East Germany, Cuba, and Soviet Union to learn Marxist theory, which one writer wackily calls “political indoctrination” and “ideological indoctrination”...Other writers say that the USSR happily gave Derg weapons and that numerous Soviet and Cuban advisers were deployed in 1977...there was coordination between the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) and the EPLF (Eritrean People’s Liberation Front) in fighting the Ethiopians, in fighting the Ethiopians, and calling on countries to counter Soviet and Cuban intervention and defeat “Soviet-based Ethiopia”...US planners were afraid that the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, of which the pro-independence group FRELITIN declared independence for the island, would become “Cuba in the Indian Ocean” so they supported and backed an invasion and occupation by the brutal anti-communist authoritarian government of Indonesia. FRELITIN, as the main guerrilla group fighting this brutal occupation, was supported by Cuba and Vietnam but one writer claims that the

Soviets were not in support...The Wikipedia page on this topic says that...the Soviet Union (1975-1991)...backed the Timorese struggle...the Soviets supporting the MPLA...The Cuban assistance to the Angolans would have been almost impossible if the Soviets had not given much of the logistical support despite the fact that it was ultimately the Cuban forces that changed the tide. There is a revealing quote by Cuban Communist politician Carlos Rafael Rodriguez who said the following, with my italics at the end: "Cuba and Angola did not have all the technical means for their men to fight the racist South African army [basically UNITA]. Without the USSR, imperialism would have defeated the Angolan people"...the assistance in Angola shows that the Soviets were clearly on the side of African liberation while the Chinese were clearly not, as they backed UNITA, led by the horrid Savimbi...South Africa, covertly backed by the United States, would only give South-West Africa, which became Namibia, its independence on the conditionality of Cuban withdrawal from Angola, along with an end to Soviet and Cuban aid to the Marxist government of Angola... This idea of getting needing Soviet approval is silly because Cuba had a turbulent relationship with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, which improved in the 1970s and 1980s but ruptured with Mikhail Gorbachev, who arguably accelerated the Soviet collapse with his ideas of "glasnost" and "perestroika"...Other scholars, including the bourgeois and likely anti-communists Ronald Oliver and Anthony Atmore, write about how the Soviets sent \$12 billion in military aid and arms to Mengistu in Ethiopia between 1977-1990, paid the expenses of the Cuban military personnel...These bourgeois scholars inadvertently admit that Soviet and Cuban intervention was necessary, saying that the removal of the Cuban military forces and end of massive Soviet arms shipments "released pent-up tensions both within that country [Ethiopia] and around its borders"...the epidemic of dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) spread across Cuba in 1981 effort which was meant to be used against Soviet forces but was actually used against the Cuban people which even Cuban exiles executing the mission didn't like...Gleijeses argues that there is little evidence that the Chinese provided more assistance than the Soviets in these liberation struggles and that the Soviets did not know about this training until April 1965 when Che told the Soviet Ambassador at the time"- From a post titled "[A History of Revolutionary Cuba](#)"

- " One South African publication wrote that Fidel and Cuba engaged in interventions in Africa without consulting Soviet leadership, disproving they were a "satellite" of the Soviet Union, relying on Piero Gleijeses's works on Cuba, an academic who likely is not radical."- From a post titled "[The legacy of Fidel Castro and brutal US imperialism](#)"

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/cuba>

## Relationship between the Soviet Union and the Zionists

- [Why did the USSR help to create Israel, but then became its foe?:](#)

Joseph Stalin strongly supported the creation of Israel in 1947 because **he hoped the Jewish state would be a Soviet ally in the Middle East. But when things didn't work out between Moscow and Tel Aviv, the Soviet Union became hostile and turned into a staunch Arab**



ally. In 1947, the situation in the Middle East was very tense, with bombs and violent clashes every week. Great Britain, which had been administrating Palestine since 1920, wanted to terminate the mandate and let the ex-colony go free. Still, it was clear that independence would lead to more bloodshed and war. Tensions were rising between Palestine Arabs (1.2 million people, or 65 percent of the population) and Jewish settlers (608,000 people, or 35 percent of the total). Arabs didn't want a Jewish state in Palestine and threatened to "throw it into the sea," if one was created. But the Jews, who had just suffered the horrors of the Holocaust, were ready to fight to establish their homeland. Still, they needed diplomatic and economic support, and one of their main allies in the Independence War of 1948-1949 (Arabs know it as The Catastrophe) would be unexpected. Desiring to expand the Soviet sphere of influence after victory in World War II, Stalin was ready to offer support to the Jews...As for Israel, Stalin was not going to let Soviet Jewish citizens emigrate there...As Leonid Mlechin, a Russian historian and journalist told Ekho Moskvyy radio, "creating a Jewish state in Palestine was a way for Stalin to push a weakened Great Britain, which he hated, out of the Middle East." Since Arab regimes were often pro-British, Stalin **\*\*preferred to work with the Zionists**. Previously a Soviet ally in World War II and now a geopolitical rival, Great Britain was also hated by Jewish settlers. In 1946, Zionist militants bombed Jerusalem's King David Hotel, where the British administration was housed, killing 91 people. Driving out the British was a goal shared by the Zionists and the USSR, though for different reasons. After Great Britain's mandate was terminated, the Palestinian issue passed to the United Nations, which had to find a solution. While Great Britain didn't support the idea of creating an independent Jewish state, the two main powers in the post-war order, the USSR and the U.S., **opted for a two-state solution, which in turn was strongly opposed by Arab states**. In November 1947, the issue was voted on during the UN General Assembly plenary meeting...Soviet ambassador to the UN, Andrei Gromyko, said during his speech: "The Jewish people have been connected with Palestine throughout a long historical period." This contravened the Arab viewpoint that the creation of Israel was unjust. The USSR was **the first country to officially recognize Israel**, two days after it declared independence on May 14, 1948. The U.S., which also supported the creation of Israel, officially banned weapon supplies to the Middle East. **Unlike the Americans, however, Moscow sent arms to the Zionists, though unofficially and through other countries, such as Czechoslovakia**. The USSR used German weapons captured at the end of the war. Israel got rifles, mortars and even several Messerschmitt fighter planes from Czechoslovakia, of course, with Soviet permission and consent...the USSR definitely played a major role in Israel's victory in 1948...Stalin's support for the Israeli cause didn't last long. As Julius Kosharovsky, a Russian-born Israeli historian, said in his book on the Zionist movement in the USSR, bilateral relations deteriorated soon after Golda Meir, Israel's envoy to Russia, **raised the issue of the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel**. The answer was a strict "No." The official Soviet position was that all Soviet Jews, like all Soviet people in general, were extremely happy and didn't need any Promised Land. Israeli politicians couldn't accept this, and **they soon turned to the U.S.** as their main ally. Israel's new alliance with the U.S. had severe consequences in the coming years and decades...Also, starting in the early 1950s and until the Cold War's end, the USSR **supported the Arabs in their conflict with Israel**.

- [Marx, Lenin and Trotsky's Anti-Zionist Positions on the Jewish Question](#)



It is clear here that the attempt at relegating Marx's, Lenin's, and Trotsky's positions on the Jewish Question to "relativism" with regards to Jewish nationalism/Zionism is an attempt to throw mud in the water and create confusion. **The reason being is that taking the quotes at an early stage or late stage means little when one understands the fundamental Marxist scientific notions that deal with the question of chauvinist nationalism especially as evident in communist positions firm and resolved against Nazism and Zionism alike two ideologies intertwined in fascism and racial segregation...**In the ultimate communist stage NO RELIGIOUS or NATIONALIST affiliations exist to separate people. The communist cry is even clearer in its call for revolution, it subscribes to the formation of two classes the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie in its call in the communist manifesto it makes this clear for all...The fundamental notions of Marxism and its science discuss the evolution of societies in historical materialist progression to shed the primitive biases of racism, chauvinistic nationalism, and religious separation. As Samir Amin would say, the very concept of a nation state in Europe was the founding of a feudal Europe where racial and linguistic differences were encouraged to separate the peasants in order to facilitate their exploitation. **Keeping in mind that the Arab homeland necessitates as Mao Tse Tung said a pragmatic Marxism not a dogmatic application of the Western model.** A Marxist program...in the Arab homeland must take on the special circumstances of the Arab homeland in its current historical materialist stage.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/ussrandzionists>

## Soviet Union and Chinese Revolution

- [Revolution by telegraph? Stalin on the agrarian nature of the Chinese Revolution](#), 2015.
- [Marxism with national characteristics?](#)
- [Mao's Evaluations of Stalin](#)

Also see page on the [Sino-Soviet split](#) and page on [Stalin](#).

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/ussrchina>

## Why do people criticize Stalin?

Apart from the absurd declaration that anything post-Lenin is "Stalinist," an idea promoted by Trotskyists, this goes into reasons why people could dislike, hate or despise Stalin (like those [bourgeois individuals](#) for [example](#)), just for context. None of these comrades, quoted below, despise Stalin, in fact they work to disprove myths about him, but their writings could give a clue into why people wouldn't like Stalin.

Abandoning NEP too quickly?

As [this comment](#) alludes to:

During the "Stalinist era" the soviet economy had a far less market-based approach [like NEP] than during and after the Khrushchev era. During and after Khrushchev's reign commodity

production on a semi-capitalist basis became more and more prevalent. Some Marxists see this as the basis for the USSR's stagnation and eventual collapse.

### Socialism in one country

As noted in [this comment](#) which fully explains the idea of Socialism in One Country:

One of the big debate issues faced by the USSR was whether to adopt "Socialism in One Country" which was basically a response to the situation the USSR found themselves in after their revolution was successful but all the other ones around the world failed. This was against the expectations of pretty much everybody who had thought that Germany, with the most powerful working class movement in the world, would succeed and link with the USSR. The basic idea was that instead of focusing on invading other countries to foment revolution they focus on strengthening and improving the USSR which was indeed still in a precarious position...SIOC is often misrepresented as a strict focus on the USSR with no attempt to foment proletarian revolution, or the belief that socialism could be fully victorious in just one country, but based on the USSR's aid of numerous revolutions and Stalin's own writings I say this is not correct...To be brief, the goal was to focus on building up Russia first, to defend against aggression and industrialize it further since it was recovering from years of horrible war and economic disaster, but still aid proletarian revolution elsewhere -- which by this point it was beginning to become clear was most likely to happen/succeed in the peripheries of capitalism, not its centers...SIOC is often contrasted with Trotsky's conception of Permanent Revolution however they're not really opposites so much as theories addressing different things but that conflict in some ways.

Also referred to in [this comment](#):

"Socialism in one country was never intended to be a universal theory but a reaction to the conditions that surrounded Russia. It could be contributed to any country that undergoes socialism. The problem is balancing it while doing everything in your power to support a world revolution. Trotsky's analysis said they weren't balancing it, and not doing everything in their power to bring about even a first world socialism (which even though I agree with it, it is debatable)."

### Collectivization

As noted in [this comment](#):

Another debate faced during this time was whether to extend the New Economic Policy...or to collectivize farms. Under the NEP some peasants had private property (which was a demand of peasants in the revolution) and aspects of a market mechanisms were allowed. This meant that the countryside had its own class struggle going on between wealthier land owners (kulaks) and middle/lower peasants -- this led to problems with production among other issues. Collectivization basically meant consolidating this private property into collective farms to increase production/speed up industrialization and resolve the class struggle...A common criticism of Stalinism is that the way of implementing this was too harsh and reckless.

## Purges

As noted in [this comment](#) which slightly mentions the purges:

Another factor of "Stalinism" was the purges, in which many members of the party were imprisoned, exiled, or executed...there is a degree of truth to this in my opinion but I must say that it is often extremely exaggerated.

Also noted in [this comment](#) which talks about the purges:

Robert Conquest's claims that the Communist Party (Stalin was General Secretary) killed 12 million political prisoners in the labor camps between 1930 and 1953 with about 1 million in '37-38 (the purge). Now after the collapse of the USSR there was a guy named Volkogonov who Yeltsin let open the archives...Volkogonov found that there was about 30k persons condemned to death by military tribunals during this purge. Now this is at odds with the KGB files. Their files say that there was close to 800k people condemned to death from 1930-1953 with close to 700k of them being during the purge. The discrepancy between these figures is because the KGB numbers include common criminals. At this time rape was still punishable by death. This said not everyone condemned to death was killed. A lot of them were sent to gulags to be rehabilitated...I think something that throws the perspective on the purges off is what happened leading up to it. In 1934 Kirov was assassinated and freaked people the fuck out. There was also a lot of industrial sabotage going on. An American working in the USSR, John Littlepage, wrote a book about how some of the CP officials (who were later purged) would purposefully approve and alter designs that would not work because they wanted Stalin's 5 year plan to fail. There was also the Kulaks who wanted their land and feudal like positions back that would burn fields and kill farm animals. The context of these acts of continued insurgency and sabotage come on the heels of the breakdown in the direction the growth of the country. I know this is a tangent but it's important. There were three main camps in the CP led by three revolutionaries: Trotsky, Stalin, and Bukharin...This was a crazy repressive system that was needed because you were fighting a civil war. Lenin and Stalin wanted the NEP calling it a strategic retreat...This created some sort of a market based system and semi-capitalism. This was replaced in 28 with Stalin's 5 year plan. Now there were camps. Trotsky and his camp wanted to go ahead with the revolution and international communism and restore War Communism. They wanted to push the peasants into collectivization...and full soviet control. The ideal was to create an example of socialism and that workers in America, France, etc would rise up and come to the aid of Russia. This was where the ideal of Permanent Revolution came from...Bukharin and his camp wanted to keep the NEP and even go further. Bukharin was originally weary of the NEP because he felt that only full restoration of capitalism will build the material wealth needed for socialism to be able to come about. He was an orthodox Marxist in this sense...Now, the Bukharin and Stalin camps united against what they perceived as the recklessness of the Trotsky camp but came to butt heads on the NEP/Stalin 5 year plan...Most people in the USSR believed that Bukharin was the real threat to Stalin (not Trotsky) and there is some evidence that he was conspiring to overthrow Stalin in a party coup. There is also some evidence that his supporters willfully engaged in industrial sabotage...The Stalin camp is the one that won out in party elections and in the use of violence. In elections the Bukharin people united to elect him but many later turned their back once the Trotsky camp was marginalized. To me this makes sense. Trotsky lost the

vote 700,000 to 1,000 but not all 700k are Stalin supporters. Once Trotsky is expelled they start their infighting that leads to the great purge."

Also noted in [this comment](#) which explains the reasons for the purges:

...basically there was room, within boundaries set by "stalinism as a program", for debate between eg factory managers and planners, or eg between Stalin and Voroshilov on a defense initiative. Stalin even felt the need to pen defenses of his economic strategies because of fierce debate over whether they were the correct formations for building socialism (though people were shot over this issue). Also discipline and the legal system was not always controlled by the center, nor was the center consistent on legal matters. One week the center might be demanding denunciations, but the next week it might be demanding that political statements against Stalinism by dissatisfied workers be given a pass. So Stalinism really wasn't the iron fist of one dictator and the extension of his whims or the wholesale massacre of opposition. Not everything that was critical was defined as a counter-revolutionary crime, far from it. I do think, however, that way too much was defined as a counter-revolutionary crime. IMO the definition that Stalinism set for "crimes against the people" was much too broad and applied without regard (obviously) to factuality in many individual cases. This has allowed a myth to develop about how Stalin was a sort of devious, all-knowing totalitarian monster or demi-god, who's psychotic paranoia murdered millions of innocents. That's totally untrue. Stalinism did have enormous problems and some injustices, but they should be judged systemically and with an eye to the facts.

This comment says that Yezhov [was connected to Stalin](#):

Yezhov mostly served as the attack dog for the First Secretaries under Stalin, the same people who pushed for the Purges in the first place. He was loyal to them. Stalin replaced him with Beria, who, despite being a sick twisted fuck, was at least on the Stalin side of the political split

Which aligns with [the next comment](#), saying Yezhov was part of the purges's excess:

There is a tendency to demonize Yezhov, but I don't think he was some sort of a monster. He was just a bureaucrat (a very effective one), who meticulously carried out orders he received from Stalin. At some point Yezhov probably went a bit further than it was required from him, but he should share the blame for that with Stalin and all Politburo members. Instead, they made him the main scapegoat and executed him - and all other NKVD officers who were involved in purges in 1937-1939. In short, Yezhov just carried out Stalin's orders. Whatever he did, Stalin shares responsibility for that.

And the [next one](#):

I think Yezhov and his men bear more responsibility for the excesses of the Purges than Stalin. Yezhov didn't just go a little bit further than he was ordered. The current evidence suggests that Stalin did not know about Yezhov and his men's excesses when they were happening and when he found out, Yezhov was tried, confessed (he said he did it to sow discontent in hopes of undermining Stalin), and executed...

Due to [the construct](#) of the USSR at the time?:

While I completely agree, I think we should look more than just Stalin and co., but at the whole construct of the USSR at that time, it became very bureaucratic, and rather than the withering away of the state, it became more powerful. Now this is not due to one great man becoming corrupt, but due to the material conditions that surrounded the Soviet Union. For it's state to wither away, would open itself up to the dangers of foreign invasion. For it to strengthen would ultimately result in a degeneration and deformation of what it set out to be and result in capitalist restoration. The Soviet Union was plagued by the west and the threat of war, it inherited famine, a country destroyed by war, and a lack of industrialization. Had Trotsky come to power, or Lenin lived there would still have been that class struggle that ultimately led in the restoration of capitalism. So the blame may lie with the individuals, but we cannot forget the conditions they faced, while at the same time not excusing their actions.

Idea that USSR was "state capitalist"

One comment that [pokes at this idea](#):

In short, no. My analysis is that Stalin's USSR was socialist if any state has ever been. I don't know if you're aware, but many of the arguments that the USSR was state capitalist originated in Nazi propaganda (but this isn't sufficient to refute the argument, obviously). First, it's important to define state capitalism. I consider state capitalism to be state ownership of the means of production, but where labor-power is still a commodity, a bourgeoisie extracts surplus power, and the laws of motion of capitalist production dominate the economic logic of the social formation. With these criteria, I would say that Stalin's Russia did not fit this definition. Rather, it was a genuine Dictatorship of the Proletariat; it was a socialist state. I think sometimes we conflate control of the means of production with day-to-day operation. Just because managers exist, this doesn't indicate capitalism or fundamental control by some sort of ruling class. Stalin's Russia saw rapid increase in living conditions, housing, literacy, healthcare, life expectancy, etc. Structural unemployment was virtually non-existent, and as we know, a reserve army of the unemployed is crucial for capitalists. In fact, Soviet Russia faced a perpetual labor shortage as they sought to industrialize. The economy grew every year (save years of war), indicating the absence of overproduction crises. The commanding heights of the economy of the Soviet Union were collectively owned, and the economy was centrally planned. There's really no evidence for any sort of ruling class exploiting workers, it's mainly propaganda.

Forced deportations

One comment directly [addresses this head on](#):

Another ethnic group that suffered mass expulsion was the Russaki, or Russian-Germans. The population transfer was triggered by Nazi Germany's violation of Molotov-Ribbentrop in 1941. A decree from the Supreme Soviet Presidium precipitated the removal of 1.2 million Russian-Germans; most were relocated in Siberia and parts of Central Asia. Obviously the driving force behind Soviet actions in this case was the fear of a so-called "fifth column" in the country. In 1943 and 1944 Karachays, a Turkic-speaking people of the North Caucasus region, were accused

of collaborating with the occupying German army. In November 1943, 68,938 persons were transferred to Kazakhstan and Kirghizia. Were these charges baseless? Not in the least. In his excellent biography of the Man of Steel, New Zealand-born historian Ian Grey writes that along with other Russian Muslims, the Karachai displayed pro-German sympathies, at least to some degree. Alexander Dallin recounts in *German Rule in Russia: 1941-1945: A Study of Occupation Policies*; London; 1981; pages 244, 246, 258 that early in the Soviet-German war: "...Revolts broke out among some of the Caucasian Mountaineers. Most widespread in the Muslim areas, particularly among the Chechens and Karachai, these rebellions prepared the ground for a change of regime....Faced with a concentrated German onslaught and a lack of support from the indigenous population, the Red Army retreated from Rostov to the Greater Caucasus Mountains without giving battle....In the Karachai region the bulk of the Muslim Mountaineers accorded the Germans a more genuine welcome than in most other occupied areas. The Germans...announced the formation of a Karachai voluntary squadron of horsemen to fight with the German army....During the entire occupation, there was no evidence of anti-German activity in the Karachai area". On December 27, 1943, NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria commenced the deportation of Kalmyks, a Buddhist people living in southern Russia near the Volga river basin. Around half deported to Siberia died before being allowed to return home in 1957. Their situation was analogous to the Karachays. Ephemeral under German occupation, they were accused of collaborating with the Nazis by the Soviet leadership...The German army often made the clichéd promise of independence to the ethnic groups it presided over. Sometimes the people were persuaded; other times they were not. Edvard Radzinsky writes in his 1996 *Stalin* that "During their occupation of the Caucasus the Germans had promised independence to the Chechens, the Ingush, the Balkars, and the Kalmyks. Members of these ethnic groups did sometimes collaborate with the Germans. The same was true of the Crimean Tartars". In 1943 there were about 450,000 Chechens and Ingush in the Chechen Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, an artificial merger of the two groups established in 1936. Furr writes of "massive collaboration" with German forces and quotes a February 2000 *Radio Svoboda* interview with Chechen nationalists who brag of a "pro-German" anti-Soviet rebellion in February 1943, "when the Nazi penetration towards the Caucasus was at its greatest". In March of 1944, the deportation of 38,000 Balkars (Turkish people in the Northern Caucasus near Elbrus Mountain) began. Sent to Central Asia, between 20% and 40% of the Balkars transferred died from 1944 to 1956. Alexander Werth notes in *Russia at War: 1941-1945* (1964) that "the Muslim Balkars were more outspokenly pro-German than the mostly non-Muslim (Christian) Kabardinians." In May of 1944, the deportation of Crimean Tartars began. The forced removal began only one month after the German army withdrew from the Crimean Peninsula. Furr writes that in 1939 there were 218,000 Crimean Tartars and estimates that the proportional amount of military-aged men should be about 22,000, or 10% of the population. He says that by 1944, "20,000 Crimean Tartars had joined Nazi Forces and were fighting against the Red Army". Furr's source for the claim is researcher J. Otto Pohl, who is also cited in a 2002 article by Greta Lynn Uehling for International Committee for Crimea. Interestingly, Uehling asserts that Crimean Tartar participation in "German self-defense battalions" was not entirely voluntary, in that it was often "secured at gunpoint". Nevertheless, Uehling admits that there was a great deal of collaboration between Crimean Tartars and Nazi Forces. I think I've covered the main deportations of the WWII era. As you can probably tell, in most cases the State had a good reason for its population transfers. The ethnic groups often contained many elements tied to foreign enemies like Germany and Japan. But I do want to make it clear that the USSR was



collectively punishing these groups. As Furr says, it was not following the Enlightenment views of individual, as opposed to collective, punishment. Therefore, in some sense of the word, the deportations can be construed as "barbaric". Did the Party at this point in time really care much for the diverse groups of people in the Far East? I'm not sure. Again, WWII was going on in the background, so maybe some of us can excuse the excesses. I, for one, believe that this was a very dark time in Soviet history.

And [another comment](#) on the matter:

If you know your Soviet history, you should also know that many of the things Khrushchev says in his "Secret Speech" are pure bullshit. This allegation is no different. I don't reject the fact that there were mass deportations of certain ethnic groups, but contrary to Khrushchev's supposition, these mass deportations were actually driven by military considerations. After all, WWII was going on in the background, particularly in the rear of the Red Army. So you want non-bourgeois sources, huh? Keep in mind that many bourgeois historians have done good work on the USSR, not every Sovietologist is Robert Conquest or Richard Pipes. But I do have a copy of Furr's book, so I'll borrow from that a bit. The first large-scale deportation of a specific ethnic group came in 1937, when about 175,000 Koreans living on the Chinese border were forcefully relocated to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan because they were allegedly spying for the Japanese. Now, I know what you're thinking: it is simply improbable that almost 175,000 people would all be spying for a foreign enemy. Furr responds by saying that if "only the guilty" were punished, the nation as a whole would split, and its survival would be threatened. Young men were usually the demographic involved in conspiracies, and if only they were deported, you could probably make an educated guess what would happen to the group altogether. So instead, tactics of mass deportation were used to keep the groups intact. Were the accusations of espionage veracious?...According to Lyushkov, Stalin ordered the deportations "from the standpoint of counter-intelligence". He sincerely believed that the Koreans in the Far East had spies for the Japanese in their midst. Hiroaki Kuromiya covered the topic extensively in his *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s*. He writes that the Soviet-Japanese border areas "had been tense for some time". One Soviet report dated December 25, 1934 describes two Chinese spies sent by the Japanese being detained on their side of the border. On December 28, a Soviet border guard was shot at by four unknown men from the "Manchu" side. And on the very next day, a Japanese plane invaded Soviet air territory near Grodekovsky (гродековский). In 1936, according to Japanese estimates, there were 203 border disputes with the Soviet Union. Still, despite all of this, Kuromiya contends that it isn't clear whether any of the ethnic Chinese and Koreans deported were actually spies. History suggests that Japan very well may have been extensively using espionage tactics, as they used them in both the Russo-Japanese War and the Siberian Civil War. Knowledge of the prevalence of black ops near the border areas combined with Stalin's conversation with Lyushkov should lead honest people to the conclusion that the mass deportations were not based on racism or hatred for Japanese culture, but fear.

[Legitimate criticisms of Stalin](#)

Coming from [this thread](#):

- 1.

Stalin was ineffective at putting into effect the proletarian dictatorship that Russia needed, and he should not have tried just yet to industrialize a nation already engaged in war. (The First Five Year Plan)

2..

Poor understanding of dialectical materialism. Much of his errors flowed from that. His view of contradiction was very mechanical and sometimes devolved into metaphysics (particularly around the national question and contradictions amongst the people)...The metaphysics came out in Stalin's practice. Philosophically, he was still materialist (though rather mechanical) but in his practice he drew lines of demarcation between "us" vs "the enemy" that really didn't exist in reality eg. he didn't understand contradictions amongst the people and class struggle as being part of the development of socialism, so anyone in opposition was taken to be an enemy agent from something outside and hostile to socialism (usually foreign imperialism). Then rather than conducting principled struggle over line they would call out the secret police.

3.

I think the agrarian reform was more or less a disaster. This is an extremely complicated problem and I'm not really sure that anyone could have done a much better job, but the truth is that productivity was appallingly low for many decades, the use of violence became necessary in particularly dramatic situations like famines, wars or natural disasters, the contradictions between private and social production were poorly understood, the many different solutions implemented didn't work very well, not enough incentives were given for people to truly improve things, and a long etc. Eventually things started to work better (by the late 40s early 50s), and others learned a lot from all this experience (like Mao), but every time I read about this I cannot help but think that somehow it should have been possible to handle things a bit better. Stalin didn't understand very well the difference between the antagonisms between the enemies of socialism and the USSR and the internal antagonisms between different political lines in the USSR. So often both were confused, and people with the "wrong" ideas accused of being traitors...Stalin conflated to some extent the interests of the USSR with the interests of Socialism. While this is somewhat understandable...I think this led in some cases to the Comintern pushing in the wrong direction, or making everyone do things that might make sense for the USSR but not for other Communist parties.

## Learning the reality about Stalin

Varying Resources

*Ludu Martin's Another View of Stalin*

- [Ludu Martin's Another View of Stalin](#), full book.

*Grover Furr's ""Stalin and the Struggle for Democratic Reform"*

- Grover Furr, ["Stalin and the Struggle for Democratic Reform Part One"](#), 120 points, so not reprinted. See [part 2](#), 63 points, as well. Both parts have been turned into PDFs [here](#) and [here](#).



### *Quality of ground troops*

- [The quality of ground troops](#), 2017:

Way back in 1945, Stalin was told of the first nuclear test in the USA. He was sceptical. Why? You may have all the firepower in the world, he pointed out, but it is the quality of ground troops that makes all the difference. Stalin's insights are still very relevant. The USA loves firing missiles and dropping bombs – more bombs were dropped in North Korea in the early 1950s than in the whole of the second world war. But as soon as ground troops go in, they are clearly inferior. The recent history of failures reveals this all too clearly: Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya ... One wonders how long the US war machine can keep on failing.

And – as a footnote – I am afraid I was wrong about Trump on the international scene. He is no different from the Bushes, Clinton and Obama, acting like drunken cowboys, trying to provoke one country after another.

### *Losurdo's new book on Western Marxism*

- [Losurdo's new book on Western Marxism](#):

Recently published is a new book by the stakhanovite, Domenico Losurdo, called: Western Marxism: How It Was Born, How It Died and How It Can Rise Again.

The brief description (found here) reads:

Western Marxism was afflicted by a sort of myopia: it didn't realize that the wind of the revolution was blowing from Russia to China and the Third World, joining with the national revolutions against Western imperialism.

There was a time when Marxism was an obligatory point of reference for any philosophical and political debate: those years saw the biggest victories for 'Western Marxism', which presented itself in stark contrast to its Eastern counterpart, accused of being a state ideology that propped up 'Socialist' regimes in Eastern Europe and Asia. Although at first the October revolution was viewed with hope, 20th century Communism contributed to the disintegration of the global colonial complex rather than creating a radically new social system. An extraordinary result that Western Marxism failed adequately to understand or appreciate. Hence its crisis and collapse. If it is to be revived, it must examine the anticolonial revolution and answer three key questions: What has the global anticolonial uprising meant in terms of freedom and emancipation? How is the clash between colonialism and anticolonialism played out today? What relationship was there between the anticolonial and anticapitalist struggles?

Losurdo puts these questions to the great authors of the 20th century – Bloch, Lukács, Adorno and Foucault – and of today – Agamben, Badiou and Žižek – in a heated debate that combines historical reconstruction and philosophical enquiry.

Exactly! For it was the Soviet Union that developed a thoroughly anti-colonial policy (arising from its ‘affirmation action’ nationalities policy). This policy enabled arms, personnel and know-how to support most of the anti-colonial struggles of the twentieth century as part of the global undermining of imperialist capitalism. Indeed, what is now called ‘post-colonialism’ could not have arisen – temporally and theoretically – without the anti-colonial theory and practice developed in the Soviet Union (especially by you-know-who).

*Karl Barth on Stalin*

- [Karl Barth on Stalin](#)

The socialism of Karl Barth – the greatest theologian of the twentieth century – is reasonably well-known, but for many the following observation is a step too far:

It would be quite absurd to mention in the same breath the philosophy of Marxism and the “ideology” of the Third Reich, to mention a man of the stature of Joseph Stalin in the same breath as such charlatans as Hitler, Göring, Hess, Goebbels, Himmler, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, Streicher, etc. What has been tackled in Soviet Russia – albeit with very dirty and bloody hands and in a way that rightly shocks us – is, after all, a constructive idea, the solution of a problem which is a serious and burning problem for us as well, and which we with our clean hands have not yet tackled anything like energetically enough: the social problem (‘Die Kirche zwischen Ost und West’, 1949).

Obviously, for me this is where Barth actually becomes interesting.

*Matthew 25:13: Stalin’s revolutionary reading*

- [Matthew 25:13: Stalin’s revolutionary reading](#), 2014:

Ever the biblical student, Stalin writes to comrades in Czechoslovakia regarding Matthew 25:13:

Advantage must be taken of the lull to strengthen the Party, to Bolshevise it and make it “always ready” for all possible “complications”; for “ye know neither the day nor the hour” wherein “the bridegroom cometh” to open the road for a new revolutionary upsurge. (Works, vol. 7, p. 68)

*The Leninist style of work (according to Stalin)*

- [The Leninist style of work \(according to Stalin\)](#), 2014:

In his fascinating piece, ‘The Foundations of Leninism’, Stalin decisively claims Lenin’s heritage against the arrogant quirkiness of Trotsky. Among other gems is what Stalin calls the ‘Leninist style in work’. Now what does that mean?

It has two specific features:

a) Russian revolutionary sweep and

b) American efficiency.

The style of Leninism consists in combining these two specific features in Party and state work. Russian revolutionary sweep is an antidote to inertia, routine, conservatism, mental stagnation and slavish submission to ancient traditions. Russian revolutionary sweep is the life giving force which stimulates thought, impels things forward, breaks the past and opens up perspectives. Without it no progress is possible. But Russian revolutionary sweep has every chance of degenerating in practice into empty “revolutionary” Manilovism if it is not combined with American efficiency in work.

American efficiency ... is an antidote to “revolutionary” Manilovism and fantastic scheme concocting. American efficiency is that indomitable force which neither knows nor recognises obstacles; which with its business-like perseverance brushes aside all obstacles; which continues at a task once started until it is finished, even if it is a minor task; and without which serious constructive work is inconceivable. But American efficiency has every chance of degenerating into narrow and unprincipled practicalism if it is not combined with Russian revolutionary sweep.

Works, volume 6, pp. 194-95

*Stalin's two commandments*

- [Stalin's two commandments](#), 2014:

Why use ten when two commandments are enough (Matthew 22:35-40)? So also Stalin:

The first commandment: Don't allow yourselves to be provoked by the counter-revolutionaries; arm yourselves with restraint and self-control; save your strength for the coming struggle; permit no premature actions.

The second commandment: Rally more closely around our Party; close your ranks in face of the assault of our innumerable enemies; keep the banner flying; encourage the weak, rally the stragglers and enlighten the unawakened. (Collected Works, vol. 3, p. 113)

*Stalin: Time's Man of the Year – twice*

- [Stalin: Time's Man of the Year – twice](#), 2014:

The first was in 1939, although the reason was ambivalent: ‘Whether Europe’s new era will end in nationalist chaos, good or bad internationalism, or what not, the era will be new—and the end of the old era will have been finally precipitated by a man whose domain lies mostly outside Europe. This Joseph Stalin did by dramatically switching the power balance of Europe one August night. It made Joseph Stalin man of 1939. History may not like him but history cannot forget him.’

By the end of 1942, the magazine was echoing the growing world-wide acclaim of Stalin, especially as the victory at Stalingrad and turning point of the Second World War was becoming clear: 'The year 1942 was a year of blood and strength. The man whose name means steel in Russian, whose few words of English include the American expression 'tough guy' was the man of 1942. Only Joseph Stalin fully knew how close Russia stood to defeat in 1942, and only Joseph Stalin fully knew how he brought Russia through. But the whole world knew what the alternative would have been. The man who knew it best of all was Adolf Hitler, who found his past accomplishments turning into dust.'

#### *Stalin's tobacco preferences*

- [Stalin's tobacco preferences](#), 2014:

No less iconic than Joseph Stalin's moustache was his pipe. But what did he put in it? Once he settled on his favoured cherry root pipe, his tobacco of choice was 'Herzegovina Flor.' So close did the connection become that the tobacco was also known as 'Stalin's Choice'. But this was no ordinary tobacco, for it appeared only in cigarettes. Stalin would take two cigarettes out of a box and shred them into his pipe. Why? Pipe tobacco at the time was cheap and rough and he had become rather fond of the flavour of the cigarettes when he was a young trainee priest and revolutionary.

So what was 'Herzegovina Flor'? The smokes were produced at the Moscow 'Java' factory, which was originally established by Samuel Gabai, from Kharkov, in the 19th century. Gabai's idea was to produce a tobacco like no other, so he found a tobacco plant in Java, grew it in Herzegovina and then shipped it to Moscow. The products initially became favoured by the elite nobility and fledgling bourgeoisie. So Stalin, as the leader of the first worker's state was in a quandary. If he smoked the cigarettes, he would give the wrong impression. So he opted for the common man's pipe, but since he couldn't tear himself away from the flavour of the tobacco, he decided to use it to fill his pipe. Eventually, the elite origins of the tobacco were forgotten and it became indelibly associated with the man himself. Many others followed suit, among them the famous soviet composer, Mayakovsky.

Of course, with the propagation of the 'black legend' of Stalin, Herzegovina Flor sadly fell out of favour. Now it is produced in small amounts, although it is still notable for its rich aroma and high tar content.

#### *Molotov falls in love with Stalin*

- [Molotov falls in love with Stalin](#), 2014.

Stalin tended to make long friendships, especially with those he could trust. One of those was Molotov (the 'hammer'), or Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Skryabin, later to take up many senior posts including that of Foreign Minister.

In his memoirs, Molotov notes that the young Stalin was 'handsome' to women. Thin, scruffy, energetic, and with the ability to charm with poetry and song, few could resist Stalin's charms.

‘Women must have been enamoured with him,’ writes Molotov, ‘because he was successful with them. He had honey-coloured eyes. They were beautiful.’ Indeed, many who describe Stalin speak of his ‘shining eyes.’

It seems that men too were attracted to Stalin, including Molotov. They first met in 1912 in Petrograd. Molotov was told to meet in a courtyard, behind a dentist’s apartment. Moments after Molotov arrived, Stalin emerged suddenly from behind a woodpile. Molotov was overwhelmed. ‘I didn’t see how he appeared, but he wore the uniform of a psychoneurology student. We introduced ourselves.’ Stalin’s pockmarks and Georgian accent were noticeable. ‘He discussed only the most important issues without wasting a second on anything unnecessary. He delivered some Pravda materials. No superfluous gestures. Then he vanished just as suddenly as he had appeared. He climbed over the fence and this was done with classic simplicity and grace’.

The next day, a smitten Molotov told a friend: ‘He’s astonishing. He possesses internal revolutionary beauty, a Bolshevik to the marrow, clever, cunning as a conspirator ...’ At their second meeting, they talked all night. They would work together for the next 41 years.

Molotov took his love of Stalin to the grave. He died in 1986 at the age of 96, lamenting Gorbachev’s reforms.

*How to be a communist and a Christian: Stalin on peasant wisdom*

- [How to be a communist and a Christian: Stalin on peasant wisdom](#)

A wonderful piece of advice from Comrade Stalin on the practical wisdom of peasants:

To illustrate how tactlessly the peasants are approached sometimes, a few words must be said about anti-religious propaganda. Occasionally, some comrades are inclined to regard the peasants as materialist philosophers and to think that it is enough to deliver a lecture on natural science to convince the peasant of the non-existence of God. Often they fail to realise that the peasant looks on God in a practical way, i.e., he is not averse to turning away from God sometimes, but he is often torn by doubt: “Who knows, maybe there is a God after all. Would it not be better to please both the Communists and God, as being safer for my affairs?” He who fails to take this peculiar mentality of the peasant into account totally fails to understand what the relations between Party and non-Party people should be, fails to understand that in matters concerning anti-religious propaganda a careful approach is needed even to the peasant’s prejudices. (Works, volume 6, page 323)

Connected is a proverb Stalin liked to quote: It needs thunder to make a peasant cross himself.

*Ship and compass: Stalin’s orthodox Erfurtian position*

- [Ship and compass: Stalin’s orthodox Erfurtian position:](#)

Comrade Iosef was quite the orthodox socialist, it appears. In his article, ‘Briefly About Disagreements in the Party’ (1905 – it actually goes on for quite a while), he subscribes to the

position laid out in the Erfurt Program of 1891, and then elaborated in Kautsky's book, *The Class Struggle* (Erfurt Program). That is, the party is the result of a union between the working class and socialist theory. It's a position Lenin also followed, especially in *What Is To Be Done?* But Stalin doesn't mind the occasional literary flourish, such as this one concerning the ship and its compass:

What is scientific socialism without the working-class movement? — A compass which, if left unused, will only grow rusty and then will have to be thrown overboard.

What is the working-class movement without socialism?—A ship without a compass which will reach the other shore in any case, but would reach it much sooner and with less danger if it had a compass.

Combine the two and you will get a splendid vessel, which will speed straight towards the other shore and reach its haven unharmed.

Combine the working-class movement with socialism and you will get a Social-Democratic movement which will speed straight towards the 'promised land' (*Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 104).

#### *Lenin and Jesus?*

- [Lenin and Jesus?](#)

Another wonderful snippet from our good friend, Comrade Joseph. Now it is Lenin and the 'rock of salvation' of Christianity:

The fact that Russia, which was formerly regarded by the oppressed nationalities as a symbol of oppression, has now, after it has become socialist, been transformed into a symbol of emancipation, cannot be called an accident. Nor is it an accident that the name of the leader of the October Revolution, Comrade Lenin, is now the most beloved name pronounced by the downtrodden, oppressed peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia of the colonial and unequal countries. In the past, the oppressed and downtrodden slaves of the vast Roman Empire regarded Christianity as a rock of salvation. We are now reaching the point where socialism may serve (and is already beginning to serve!) as the banner of liberation for the millions who inhabit the vast colonial states of imperialism (*Stalin, Works*, Vol. V, p. 354).

#### *Spirit versus Letter: On interpreting Marx*

- [Spirit versus Letter: On interpreting Marx:](#)

One of the more fascinating aspects of reading carefully through Stalin's writings is what may be called the scriptural dynamic of spirit and letter. As 2 Corinthians 3:6 puts it, 'the letter kills, but the spirit gives life'. Stalin is clearly on the side of the spirit in interpreting the texts of Marx and Lenin. Thus, Marx's thought applies to emerging capitalism, while Lenin's thought is Marxism

in the age of imperialism. To emphasise his approach, he tells a story provided by Swedish socialists:

It was at the time of the sailors' and soldiers' revolt in the Crimea. Representatives of the navy and army came to the Social-Democrats and said: "For some years past you have been calling on us to revolt against tsarism. Well, we are now convinced that you are right, and we sailors and soldiers have made up our minds to revolt and now we have come to you for advice." The Social-Democrats became flurried and replied that they couldn't decide the question of a revolt without a special conference. The sailors intimated that there was no time to lose, that everything was ready, and that if they did not get a straight answer from the Social-Democrats, and if the Social-Democrats did not take over the direction of the revolt, the whole thing might collapse. The sailors and soldiers went away pending instructions, and the Social-Democrats called a conference to discuss the matter. They took the first volume of Capital, they took the second volume of Capital, and then they took the third volume of Capital, looking for some instruction about the Crimea, about Sevastopol, about a revolt in the Crimea. But they could not find a single, literally not a single instruction in all three volumes of Capital either about Sevastopol, or about the Crimea, or about a sailors' and soldiers' revolt. They turned over the pages of other works of Marx and Engels, looking for instructions—but not a single instruction could they find. What was to be done? Meanwhile the sailors had come expecting an answer. Well, the Social-Democrats had to confess that under the circumstances they were unable to give the sailors and soldiers any instructions. "And so the sailors' and soldiers' revolt collapsed." (Works, volume 9, pages 97-98)

*First article on Stalin published*

- [First article on Stalin published](#)

I am somewhat thrilled that The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review has just published my first article on Stalin. It appears in issue 42.3 and is called 'Against Culturism: Reconsidering Stalin on Nation and Class' (247-73).

Abstract:

This article argues that the key to Stalin's early theoretical work on the national question may be read as an attack on culturism – the propensity to identify an intangible 'culture' (often with religious factors) as the basis for collective identity. Although his criticism is directed at a number of social democratic organisations at the turn of the twentieth century, it also has pertinence for today due to the persistence of culturist assumptions. Two factors are important in his criticism. The first is to define 'nation' in order to sideline the culturist position, although his own definition is not without its problems. The second tackles the question of the structure of the state: does one begin with 'national culture' or with class? Stalin proposes that class is the determining factor, which then enables a very different approach to 'national culture'. The unexpected result is that the unity provided by a focus on the workers and peasants produces both new levels of cultural diversity and enables a stronger approach to ensuring such diversity. The approach undertaken in this article pays careful attention to Stalin's theoretical and philosophical arguments as they appear in his written texts.



## *Stalin's strong state versus withering away of the state*

- [Stalin's strong state versus withering away of the state](#)

Over the last few years, I have become convinced by Losurdo's argument that a socialist state must be a strong state. How else can you transform a society, economics and culture? How else can you develop world-leading affirmative action programs in relation to ethnic minorities, or foster anti-colonial struggles, or establish major infrastructure, or indeed develop five-year plans? Stalin was, of course, the proponent of a strong socialist state, but he had to deal with a curious observation from Engels concerning the 'withering away of the state'. Losurdo shows how Marx and Engels actually recognised the need for the state to continue, observing that the whole idea of its withering was a petty-bourgeois, anarchist aberration. As for Stalin, he argued that it may be very well in the context of global socialism, but until then a strong socialist state is needed to deal with its many enemies. Or, as van Ree observes, 'He was realistic enough and not enough of a utopian to embark on a course of self-destruction'.

## Stalin: From Theology to the Philosophy of Socialism in Power

- [Stalin: From Theology to the Philosophy of Socialism in Power:](#)

I am happy to say that Springer Beijing will publish my book on Stalin later this year. I didn't realise this until today, but Springer has the largest presence in China of any international press by a long way, publishing works by Chinese authors or Chinese-based authors.

The book is called Stalin: From Theology to the Philosophy of Socialism in Power.

Here is a modified version of the preface:

This book has taken me longer than most. The subject matter has much to do with it, given the preconceptions, if not the knee-jerk reactions, that are produced by the cipher of 'Stalin'. Some years ago, I managed to acquire a set of Stalin's works, from none other than a second-hand bookshop in Kansas. Kansas! Yes, for it used to be – many, many years ago – a left-wing, if not Marxist centre in North America. How times have changed. But I soon found that the 'Works' were incomplete, ending abruptly in January of 1934. Eventually, I tracked down the remaining volumes, published by Red Star Press in London. Meanwhile, I found the Russian original, which has now been transferred (in online version with page numbers) to the University of Newcastle in Australia, one of my homes. To add to my collection, I became aware in the process of a new edition of Stalin's works, Trudy, which is in the process of publishing what may well be a full collected works by Stalin.

I set to reading Stalin, slowly and painstakingly, as I had done earlier with Marx, Engels, leading western European Marxists, and then Lenin. For some reason, Stalin took me longer, even though he wrote a little less than the others. My earlier hunch that Stalin may actually have something to offer the Marxist tradition was slowly being confirmed, but what that contribution might be took a lot more effort. It required working through the texts many times, seeking to discern the key ideas in light of the frameworks that I was developing. Why? Few had actually



worked in such a way, with many simply dismissing Stalin and thereby not even giving him the benefit of serious attention. My starting point with a theological radar meant that I was even more alone. More to the point, I began to realise that many of my assumed categories were being broken down, forcing me to begin thinking again, rethinking everything in the process.

This was, after all, socialism in power, however one may interpret the term. I also realised that socialism in power continues to be chronically under-thought, with many ‘Western’ Marxists simply refusing to countenance the possibility that anything could be learnt from socialism in power – which by 2017 offered a century of immense experiences, stunning achievements, abysmal failures, but above all, an immense resource for reflecting on socialism after the revolutionary seizure of power. Precisely this reality attracts me so much, especially now with my immersion in Chinese socialism. Stalin is one – although not the only one – of the theorists of socialism in power, whether people like it or not.

As I point out at various moments in the book, it was written largely in the context of China, my second home. I am often here for extended periods of time, especially in Beijing. Initially, I was not so enamoured with the place – too large, too hectic, too much change all the time. But after a few years, I realised why I like the place so much, with all its flaws. It is the centre of the strongest socialist state in world history, eclipsing now the Soviet Union. In the middle of Tiananmen square, the gate of heaven no less, lies the body of Chairman Mao. Here is socialist power, with a Communist Party in control. It is like a magnet to me and I am working to understand what it means. This study of Stalin is a first step in the process.

In a little more detail: half of my time is now devoted to living and researching in the People’s Republic, which has had a significant influence on the shape of the book. In an unexpected conjunction, the topics that arose through carefully reading and reflecting on Stalin’s texts turned out to be topics that are very relevant for understanding Marxism in China. The intersection initially seemed fortuitous, but it eventually became clear that the common ground is socialism in power. More specifically, the creative influence of Stalin and the Soviet Union rose to a peak in the Yan’an period of the 1930s and into the 1940s. After the failure of earlier revolutionary efforts, and the trials and triumphs of the Long March, the Chinese communists had an opportunity to study, reflect, discuss and write. Apart from works by Marx and Engels, they had recourse to the developed positions coming from the Soviet Union. Translations brought them the works of Lenin and Stalin, as well as a number of key Soviet philosophers from Stalin’s era. It was this context that framed the significant materials delivered in lectures and written in Yan’an, although the Chinese communists also clearly developed their own positions in debate with Soviet thought. Indeed, some of Mao’s most important theoretical works come from this time, continuing to influence the frameworks of Chinese Marxism today. In my study of these works, it has become clear that many of the categories first broached by Stalin are taken and reworked in the writings of Mao and others. Thus, Stalin – so often excised from the history of Marxism, let alone Marxist philosophy – is the crucial link from Marx, Engels and Lenin to Mao and modern China.

The book is predicated on the fact that Stalin was actually able to think. It may be surprising, but he is not often credited with this ability, let alone the ability to think dialectically. Was he not the one who was a novice at theory, mocked by his comrades for his faltering efforts? Many are

those who have reiterated this curious dismissal, perhaps adding the hypothesis that Stalin was either deluded and out of touch with reality or cynically in touch with reality, spinning words to justify yet another deviation. By contrast, for all its many flaws, Kotkin's biography notes Stalin's 'vigorous intellect'. And as Van Ree points out, the 'evidence is overwhelming' that 'Stalin took his own publicly avowed doctrines seriously'. I must admit that I have come to agree with Kotkin and Van Ree on these points, overturning many of my preconceptions through patient and careful attention to Stalin's works.

I have also come to the position that Stalin must be studied carefully as part of the Marxist tradition. No matter what one's assessment of Stalin may be, it is an act of intellectual laziness to deny him, for whatever reason, a place in the tradition. Stalin's library was overwhelmingly Marxist and he made extensive notes in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Even more, all of the key ideas developed by Lenin and Stalin can be found in earlier moments of the Marxist tradition. After all, a political tradition like Marxism is constantly developing, revising positions and developing new ones in light of changing circumstances.

As Copleston observed some years ago, 'The point to notice is that Stalin was very well aware that the revolution in Russia had given rise to tasks which required fresh ideas, a development of Marxism to suit the new situation'.

Different ways to interpret the Marxist tradition

- [Different ways to interpret the Marxist tradition:](#)

In recent discussion in China, I have become more aware of different ways the Marxist tradition can be interpreted. You can take any core feature, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, the withering away of the state, the distinction between socialism and communism, the nature of the socialist state, and many more.

For example, Marx uses the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' 11 times, where he means a coercive force of the state that crushes class opponents. This is in tension with his treatments of the Paris commune, where he praises the diminishment of state power and its continuance only as apparatus. Engels, by contrast, does not use dictatorship of the proletariat, but coins the phrase (only in 1894), the dying or 'withering away of the state'. Lenin develops the argument further, distinguishing between two phases, the dictatorship of the proletariat and then the state's withering. He pushes this into a distant future, but Stalin argues that it would take place only after global communism had been achieved and communism had become second nature – which may take 1000 years or more. And in Chinese Marxism, dictatorship of the proletariat becomes 'democratic dictatorship' in Mao's hands and then 'people's democratic dictatorship' with Deng Xiaoping, now as an inclusive category operating in terms of non-antagonistic contradictions.

What about socialism and communism? This distinction is not in Marx and Engels. Only in the late notes, 'Critique of the Gotha Program', does Marx distinguish an initial stage of communism and a further stage. He leaves open the possibility of more. Lenin then distinguishes these as socialism and communism, with socialism still bearing many features, such as state, classes, law and so on. Only with communism will the earlier prescriptions of Marxism begin to appear.

Stalin takes this further, pushing communism into a very distant future, while socialism has a strong multi-national state, tensions between forces and relations of production continue, people are rewarded according to work, equalisation (a petty-bourgeois idea) has no place, and the state's domestic responsibilities, affirmative action and fostering of anti-colonial struggles play huge roles. In a Chinese situation, they take an even longer view, with the preliminary stage of socialism lasting 100 years, after which a next stage emerges, the moderately prosperous, peaceful and stable society. During this process, a whole spate of new approaches emerge.

How do we interpret these developments? Here are some possibilities:

\*A narrative of betrayal. Engels betrays Marx; Lenin betrays Marx and Engels; Stalin betrays all of the former; Mao betrays them; Deng betrays Mao ... Pick your place, but betrayal of Marxism happens at some point. I find this approach quite common among 'western' Marxists.

- Continuity, sometimes radical. A smaller number take this line, arguing that all of the ideas found in Stalin, Mao or Deng have precursors in the Marxist tradition.
- Clarification. Each stage of the tradition and each of its different branches constitutes a clarification of some idea or practice that was not so clear before. This is a more common Chinese approach.
- Changing historical circumstances, which may be connected with the first or third approach. Obviously, specific circumstances, cultural histories, political realities and so on produce new problems, which require new solutions. This is what the Chinese call 'seeking truth from facts' (drawn from Mao).
- The differences between socialism seeking power and socialism in power. As Lenin and Mao pointed out repeatedly, winning a revolution is relatively easy; infinitely more complex is the effort to construct socialism. This is obviously connected with the fourth point, but plays a crucial role.

Hypocrite or Marxist? Why does the Left largely continue to ignore Stalin?

- [Hypocrite or Marxist? Why does the Left largely continue to ignore Stalin?:](#)

I have finally completed my rather lengthy book on Stalin. Throughout, I have been struck by the absence of any serious engagement with Stalin by the vast majority of the international Left. To be sure, there are one or two exceptions, such as Losurdo, Furr and a recent issue of the journal, *Crisis and Critique*, but the doctrinal orthodoxy has been set, in a curious collusion between conservatives, liberals and a good number of Marxists (thanks to Khrushchev's self-serving speech, Hannah Arendt's woeful efforts, and the anti-communist Robert Service). All one need do, then, is perhaps quote a line or two, refer to the Red Terror and forget about Stalin – despite the fact that a huge amount of research continues by those who are certainly not on the Left.

Anyway, pertinent to some of this are a few paragraphs from the introduction to the book:

The present work assumes that Stalin was actually able to think, backed up by exceedingly careful interpretations of his writings and citations. It may be surprising, but he is not often credited with this ability, let alone the ability to think dialectically. Was he not the one who was

a novice at theory, mocked by his comrades for his faltering efforts? This assumption is captured best in a fictional vignette: ‘When, at one of the party meetings of those days, Stalin involved himself in a theoretical argument, he was interrupted by a half-amused and half-indignant remark from the old Marxist scholar, Ryazanov: “Stop it, Koba, don’t make a fool of yourself. Everybody knows that theory is not exactly your field”’. By contrast, for all its many flaws, Kotkin’s biography notes Stalin’s ‘vigorous intellect’. I must admit that I have come to agree with Kotkin on this point, overturning many of my preconceptions through patient and careful attention to Stalin’s works.

This is also one of the conclusions of van Ree’s important studies of Stalin’s political thought. While I do not agree completely that Stalin developed a thoroughly tight-fitting and comprehensive doctrine to which he adhered, I do agree that Stalin gave much thought to the problems thrown up by the ever-changing situation and that he did so by immersing himself in the Marxist classics. Significant here is van Ree’s consideration of the role of Stalin’s thought in popular (mis)conceptions, which I interpret as follows. Stalin has variously been charged with vulgar Marxist, dogmatism, mystification, ignoring reality and the peddling of illusions. These charges turn on whether Stalin was out of touch or in touch with reality. If the former, then his dogmatism was one with his illusions, but this suggestion struggles to make any sense of the events as they unfolded in the Soviet Union, in all their stunning achievements, disruptions and failures. It also fails to understand the remarkable consistency in Stalin’s thought and that of the other communists who worked with him. If the latter, then he becomes a hypocrite, cynic or sophist, assuming a deliberate effort to conceal reality, as saying one thing – in very Marxist terms – but doing the opposite, or a cynical effort to secure ever more dictatorial power, or spinning words to justify yet another deviation. The problem here is that Stalin clearly believed what he thought and acted upon such positions. Ultimately, all of these charges carry with them the assumption that one has no need to consider his actual texts and the thoughts developed therein. My study indicates that this a serious mistake.

Indeed, I have come to the position that Stalin must be studied carefully as part of the Marxist tradition. The various responses I have discussed – ranging from dismissals of his intellectual ability to the charge of sophistry – function as efforts to excise Stalin from this tradition. To this should be added a narrative of betrayal, or even a Fall from the truth of Marxism. This narrative takes many forms, with some attributing the betrayal to Engels, Lenin or Stalin (apart from efforts to condemn Marxism by connecting them all to Marx). I am interested here in the charge that Stalin himself betrayed Marxism. This move is often made to distinguish him from Lenin, so that one may claim Lenin, dismiss Stalin, and then pick up another as the true heir of Lenin – whether Trotsky, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, or Castro. I find this a curious move indeed, for it erases a major figure in that tradition, who – despite his missteps from time to time – was crucial in fostering anti-colonial struggles and socialist revolutions elsewhere in the world, especially in China. No matter what one’s assessment of Stalin may be, it is an act of intellectual laziness to deny him a place in the tradition. So I follow van Ree in assuming that Stalin was very much part of the Marxist tradition. He notes that Stalin’s library was overwhelmingly Marxist and he made extensive notes in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Even more, all of the key ideas developed by Lenin and Stalin can be found in earlier moments of the Marxist tradition. After all, a political tradition like Marxism is constantly developing, revising positions and developing new ones in light of changing circumstances.

I should add that for the ‘sin’ of taking Stalin seriously as a thinker in the Marxist tradition, I have been accused from time to time of being a ‘Stalinist’ (the strange term coined by Trotsky and company). I am no such thing. Instead, I am not comfortable with assumed orthodoxies, albeit with a twist. As Losurdo pointed out to me last year, we are not the heretics or the revisionists, we are actually of the mainstream. We simply need to be patient.

So in the conclusion to the book, I draw on Losurdo’s brilliant analysis of how Stalin became a ‘black legend’ (with the obligatory *reductio ad Hitlerum*). In response, I draw on the Chinese Marxist approach to Stalin:

As with Mao, one needs to appreciate the significant achievements made and criticise the mistakes. It is as simple as that, but it has far-reaching consequences. Like Mao, Stalin and the Bolsheviks made momentous breakthroughs and achievements, but they also made egregious mistakes of which they were only sometimes conscious. If I may quote the current Chairman of the People’s Republic, Xi Jinping: ‘Revolutionary leaders are not gods, but human beings. We cannot worship them like gods or refuse to allow people to point out and correct their errors just because they are great; neither can we totally repudiate them and erase their historical feats just because they made mistakes’.

Which is another way of saying that the Stalin book is both the end of 15 year project and it provides the seeds of a very new project in a Chinese situation. It is called ‘Socialism in Power’ and seeks to analyse the theoretical implications of the realities of a communist party in power and its efforts to construct socialism. The project includes some leading Chinese researchers and international scholars open to examining the question.

Stalin and the dialectic of immanence and transcendence

- [Stalin and the dialectic of immanence and transcendence](#), 2013:

A suitable subtitle might be: party struggle as a mode of philosophy. Running through Stalin’s early debates with the Georgian Mensheviks (published in *Proletariats Brdzola*) are the matters of dialectics, class, politics and philosophy. All of them turn, it seems to me, on the relationship between immanence and transcendence. The question: does socialist consciousness arise spontaneously and naturally among the working class, or does it require a party to clarify and introduce such a consciousness? Is it one or the other?

Stalin’s answer is that the question raises a false dichotomy, for it is both. On this matter, he follows Kautsky and Lenin very closely, but gives the answer his own sharp formulation. For instance:

Modern social life is built on capitalist lines. There exist two large classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and between them a life-and-death struggle is going on. The conditions of life of the bourgeoisie compel it to strengthen the capitalist system. But the conditions of life of the proletariat compel it to undermine the capitalist system, to destroy it. Corresponding to these two classes, two kinds of consciousness are worked out: the bourgeois and the socialist. Socialist consciousness corresponds to the position of the proletariat. Hence, the proletariat accepts this

consciousness, assimilates it, and fights the capitalist system with redoubled vigour. Needless to say, if there were no capitalism and no class struggle, there would be no socialist consciousness. But the question now is: who works out, who is able to work out this socialist consciousness (i.e., scientific socialism)? Kautsky says, and I repeat his idea, that the masses of proletarians, as long as they remain proletarians, have neither the time nor the opportunity to work out socialist consciousness. "Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge," says Kautsky. The vehicles of science are the intellectuals, including, for example, Marx, Engels and others, who have both the time and opportunity to put themselves in the van of science and work out socialist consciousness. Clearly, socialist consciousness is worked out by a few Social-Democratic intellectuals who possess the time and opportunity to do so.

But what importance can socialist consciousness have in itself if it is not disseminated among the proletariat? It can remain only an empty phrase! Things will take an altogether different turn when that consciousness is disseminated among the proletariat: the proletariat will become conscious of its position and will more rapidly move towards the socialist way of life. It is here that Social-Democracy (and not only Social-Democratic intellectuals) comes in and introduces socialist consciousness into the working-class movement. This is what Kautsky has in mind when he says "socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without." (A Reply to Social-Democrat, Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 163-64).

I am more interested in the form of the argument, for it deploys one of his first efforts at what maybe called a dialectic of immanence and transcendence. Socialist consciousness arises from within and without, not in some queer conjunction, but in a mode that is dialectical. Another instance appears in his discussion of provisional government as a way to foster the revolution:

Let us turn to Engels. In the seventies an uprising broke out in Spain. The question of a provisional revolutionary government came up. At that time the Bakuninists (Anarchists) were active there. They repudiated all action from above, and this gave rise to a controversy between them and Engels. The Bakuninists preached the very thing that the "minority" are saying today. "The Bakuninists," says Engels, "for years had been propagating the idea that all revolutionary action from above downward was pernicious, and that everything must be organised and carried out from below upward." In their opinion, "every organisation of a political, so-called provisional or revolutionary power, could only be a new fraud and would be as dangerous to the proletariat as all now existing governments." Engels ridicules this view and says that life has ruthlessly refuted this doctrine of the Bakuninists. The Bakuninists were obliged to yield to the demands of life and they . . . "wholly against their anarchist principles, had to form a revolutionary government." Thus, they "trampled upon the dogma which they had only just proclaimed: that the establishment of the revolutionary government was only a deception and a new betrayal of the working class."

This is what Engels says.

It turns out, therefore, that the principle of the "minority" — action only from "below" — is an anarchist principle, which does, indeed, fundamentally contradict Social-Democratic tactics. The view of the "minority" that participation in a provisional government in any way would be fatal to the workers is an anarchist phrase, which Engels ridiculed in his day. It also turns out that life

will refute the views of the “minority” and will easily smash them as it did in the case of the Bakuninists. (The Provisional Revolutionary Government and Social-Democracy, Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 148-49).

Lining up the Mensheviks with the anarchists was of course a rhetorical move, for the Mensheviks too sought to distance themselves from anarchists (not a good idea). But the issue here is revolution from below and from above. Once again, Stalin comes out in favour of both. Here already lie the seeds of the the later valorization of the (often maligned) revolution from above in the 1930s – in terms of collectivization of industry and agriculture. But even this would not have been possible without a massive impetus from below.

Obviously, there’s a chapter brewing here for my study of Stalin. But I would like to pick up my earlier mention of ‘queer.’ At one point, Stalin refers to an opponent as the ‘queer knight.’ For some strange reason, it sounds like a great epithet for the man of steel himself: Stalin the queer knight.

The contemporaneity of non-contemporaneity: From Ernst Bloch to Stalin

- [The contemporaneity of non-contemporaneity: From Ernst Bloch to Stalin](#)

I have become quite intrigued by the way Ernst Bloch’s ‘non-contemporaneity’ (Ungleichzeitigkeit) of the present, or in shorthand the ‘contemporaneity of non-contemporaneity’, enables one to understand philosophically the reality of successful socialist revolutions. These occurred of course in ‘backward’ countries outside ‘advanced’ capitalist ones – Eastern Europe, Russia and Asia. Bloch famously developed this philosophical category in *Heritage of Our Times* (see especially 97-116) to explain the rise of fascism in Germany. For Bloch, a mode of production such as capitalism always contains pre-capitalist traces, which exist at different levels and modalities simultaneously in the present. They are like a ‘cultural ground water’, which lies closer to or further from the surface, depending on the place. At the same time, they challenge and resist the present; they ‘contradict the Now; very strangely, crookedly, from behind’ (97). Here fascism finds room to arise, for it can construct such resistance in terms of its false myths and hopes, of the Blond Beast, of blood and soil.

But Bloch’s real insight is that such non-contemporaneity also creates the possibility for socialist revolution. Here the unattained hopes of earlier forms, which gain ‘additional revolutionary force precisely from the incomplete wealth of the past’, meet the expectations of a ‘prevented future’ and unleashed forces of production with which the present is pregnant (pp. 115-16). This is precisely why one would expect socialist revolutions to happen in culturally, economically and politically ‘backward’ places like Russia and China. Here the meeting between the incomplete wealth of the past and the prevented future is more potent and revolutionary.

At the same time, the contemporaneity of non-contemporaneity also applies after the revolution, if not in heightened form. I have developed this argument most fully in relation to China (soon to be published). But Stalin also has some insights that may be understood in this way. One of these is the extraordinary dialectical argument that only a proletarian revolution can complete the bourgeois revolution. He means not merely that the October Revolution completed and



transformed the February Revolution of 1917, but also that the bourgeois revolution was completed after October, precisely when the bourgeoisie was defeated. He was certainly no slouch when it came to dialectical arguments. As a sample:

In point of fact, why did we succeed in securing the support of the peasantry as a whole in October and after October? Because we had the possibility of carrying the bourgeois revolution to completion.

Why did we have that possibility? Because we succeeded in overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and replacing it by the power of the proletariat, which alone is able to carry the bourgeois revolution to completion.

Why did we succeed in overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and establishing the power of the proletariat? Because we prepared for October under the slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry; because, proceeding from this slogan, we waged a systematic struggle against the compromising policy of the petty-bourgeois parties; because, proceeding from this slogan, we waged a systematic struggle against the vacillations of the middle peasantry in the Soviets; because only with such a slogan could we overcome the vacillations of the middle peasant, defeat the compromising policy of the petty-bourgeois parties, and rally a political army capable of waging the struggle for the transfer of power to the proletariat.

It scarcely needs proof that without these preliminary conditions, which determined the fate of the October Revolution, we could not have won the support of the peasantry as a whole for the task of completing the bourgeois revolution, either in October or after October.

That is how the combination of peasant wars with the proletarian revolution should be understood (Works, vol. 9, pp. 284-85).

It's almost like reading Ernst Bloch avant la lettre.

#### Stalin's Opinion of Trotsky

- [Stalin's Opinion of Trotsky](#)

We have often heard of Trotskyite opinions of Stalin: the latter was a man of limited intelligence and poor writing skills, who betrayed the socialist project and embodied the bureaucracy in himself. Far less often do we hear of Stalin's views on Trotsky. Since I have recently read through Stalin's works in some detail, let me offer an impression of his perspective on what was often a very personal conflict.

'Pretty but useless' (Stalin 1907 [1953], 52). This was Stalin's first impression of Trotsky, when they met at the London Congress of the Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1907. It was the beginning of what became a long political and, in many respects, personal struggle between the two. A few years later, while Stalin was in exile, he observed that Trotsky's version of a political bloc was an unprincipled and 'childish plan', expressing 'the helpless longing of an unprincipled person for a "good" principle' (Stalin 1912 [1953], 266, 1910 [1953], 216). Evoking circus



imagery, Stalin now describes Trotsky as a ‘comedian’, if not a ‘champion with fake muscles’ (Stalin 1912 [1953], 267, 1913 [1953], 288).

By the late 1910s, the references to Trotsky begin to increase, but especially after Lenin’s death. For instance, in a letter to Lenin in 1921, Stalin writes: ‘A medieval handicraftsman who imagines he is an Ibsen hero called to “save” Russia by an ancient saga’ (Stalin 1921 [1953], 50). Or perhaps he is a ‘superman’ who stands above the Central Committee (Stalin 1924 [1953]-b, 14), taking offence at everyone. However, he is more like Tit Titych, about whom it was said: ‘Who would offend you, Tit Titych? You yourself will offend everyone! (Laughter.)’ (Stalin 1924 [1953]-b, 6).

All this is relatively light-hearted, but by the mid-1920s the struggle between them became more serious. Trotsky’s prickliness contrasted sharply with Stalin’s determination. They struggled over the legacy of Lenin, with Trotsky claiming to be the true heir, while Stalin distinguished between Leninism and Trotskyism, the latter being a deviation (Stalin 1924 [1953]-c, 1924 [1953]-a, 1925 [1954]-a, 113-19, 1926 [1954]). In short, Trotskyism is ‘a peculiar ideology that is incompatible with Leninism’ (Stalin 1924 [1953]-c, 388), let alone the policies of the Comintern (Stalin 1927 [1954]-b, 314-18). Even so, Stalin was still able to make jokes at Trotsky’s expense. Thus, ‘It is not the Party’s fault if Trotsky begins to get a high temperature after every attack he makes upon the Party’ (Stalin 1925 [1954]-b, 6-7). And: ‘he resembles an actor rather than a hero’, if not a ‘comic-opera Clemenceau’ (Stalin 1927 [1954]-b, 288-89, 1927 [1954]-a, 56).

By the 1930s Stalin has dispensed with the humour at Trotsky’s expense. With the plots against the government, Trotsky’s expulsion from the party and international engagement, Trotskyism was transformed from a political trend in the working class to a ‘wild and unprincipled gang of wreckers, diversionists, spies and assassins acting on the instructions of the intelligence services of foreign states’ (Stalin 1937 [1978], 249; see also 251-52). Indeed, Trotskyism had become part of a fifth column, one with international bourgeois forces if not of fascism itself. It is full of duplicity and double-dealing, engaging in nothing less than terrorism against the Soviet state. One must never forget, writes Stalin, that ‘the more hopeless the position of the enemies becomes the more eagerly will they clutch at extreme methods as the only methods of the doomed in their struggle against the Soviet power’ (Stalin 1937 [1978], 244).

The one who ‘pretty but useless’ thirty years before has now become a ‘fiend’, a ‘venal slave’, if not a ‘monster’ (Stalin 1937 [1978], 244, 1939 [1978], 395). The feeling was mutual.

#### Narratives of Betrayal: A ‘Western’ Trope

- [Narratives of Betrayal: A ‘Western’ Trope:](#)

Lenin’s putative betrayal is more contested ground, with some seeing Lenin as a purveyor of distorted Marxism from the beginning, others that Lenin betrayed the revolution after October 1917, or that Stalin was responsible for the betrayal. But what is meant by ‘betrayal’ in this case? Let me take the example of Lenin’s betrayal of himself, for this is consistent with the role of Stalin in this case. According to this story, Lenin held to some form of ‘democratic’ position, envisaging the soviets as versions of the Paris commune. The model may have been updated and

reshaped a little in light of circumstances, but it held to ‘democratic participation’ by workers and peasants at local and national levels, open and free-wheeling debate within the communist party, and would form the basis of socialism after the revolution. However, what happened very rapidly was an authoritarian move, hollowing out the soviets in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat, if not replacing the proletarian dictatorship with the dictatorship of the party. In short, Lenin moved from a ‘democratic’ commune model to an authoritarian approach. Stalin merely carried this through to its logical conclusion. The examples could be multiplied: economically, ‘state capitalism’ was gradually introduced, a global revolution was abandoned for the sake of socialism in one country, the ‘withering away of the state’ was replaced with an authoritarian state characterised by the secret police, the self-determination of minority nationalities turned into their forced assimilation, and so on. The only difference is where one draws the line, whether within Lenin’s own thought and practice or between Lenin and Stalin. The latter is, of course, the one who began to be systematically demonised not long after he died.[4]

...Before a revolution, or perhaps for a while afterwards, the revolutionaries held to the ideal – think of Lenin in particular, but also Mao. But soon enough, they gave up on the ideal. It may have been force of circumstances, or a turn in the face of imminent failure, or simply a weakness of will. And if Lenin or Mao did not do so themselves, then Stalin or Deng were responsible for overturning the socialist ideal and destroying it. The outcome: socialism has never been realised as yet, for the true moment still awaits us.

...I have focused on European-derived, or ‘Western’ Marxism due to its preference for betrayal narratives and ideas of pristine origins. It can also be found in Russian Marxism, given the comparable cultural dynamics of that part of the world (think of the long-running struggle between Stalin and Trotsky and what their names have come to signify).

... As Lenin, Stalin and Mao were fond of saying, Marxism is not a dogma, but a guide to action

Saint Iosif: Stalin and Religion

- [Saint Iosif: Stalin and Religion](#)

In a forthcoming work, I propose to investigate Stalin through an unexpected approach: his intimate relation with religion. Hopefully, it will play a small role in the reassessments of Stalin under way by Losurdo, Roberts et al.

## **Chapter One: At the Spiritual Seminary**

Stalin is unique among world communist leaders in at least one respect: he studied theology for five years at the Tiflis Spiritual Seminary, the training college for priests in the Russian Orthodox Church. He did so during a deeply formative time of his life, from the age of 15 to the verge of his 20th birthday (1894-1899). One of the best students, he was known for his intellect and phenomenal memory. And he was notably devout, attending all worship services and even leading the choir. Yet, despite the importance of this theological study in forming Stalin’s mind and life, few if any take the time to analyse what Stalin studied and how he did so. Thus, this

chapter investigates closely Stalin's studies, especially the theological content of his study with an eye on the themes that would emerge later in his thought. The training was thorough. In the earlier years, he studied both secular and theological subjects, such as Russian literature, secular history, mathematics, church singing and biblical studies. By the later years, the focus was more intensely theological, with ecclesiastical history, liturgy, homiletics, dogma, comparative theology, moral theology, practical pastoral work, didactics, and the two staples: church singing and biblical studies. Years later, Stalin annotated the religious works in his library, and memorised long passages from the Bible. He also refused to include anti-religious works, calling them 'antireligious waste-paper'. But I am particularly interested in the continuity (rather than the discontinuity) between his theological knowledge and the activism in which he increasingly engaged. Stalin left the college just before the final examinations in 1899, of his own will. But the experience had formed him deeply. In revolutionary circles he was for many years known as 'The Priest'.

## **Chapter Two: Affirmative Action: Religions and the Church**

In the early years of the Second World War, Stalin made a historic compact with the Russian Orthodox Church. In return for support of the war effort that eventually defeated Hitler, Stalin allowed the reopening of tens of thousands of churches and the re-establishment of the church's leadership hierarchy. (These developments are far more complex than the common argument that a morally bankrupt government sought to harness the church's influence to counter the Nazis.) However, one condition applied: the church was to respect the 'affirmative action' that already applied to ethnic minorities. Stalin was the architect of the policy of fostering the languages, cultures, education, and self-government of the many 'nations' or ethnic groups in the USSR. This policy included religion: the Muslim sharia in the south was permitted, Buddhism in the east was fostered, and anti-Semitism was vigorously opposed, with many Jews in the government apparatus and heavy penalties for anti-Semitism. The old imperialism of the Russian church was to be a thing of past.

It is not for nothing that from this period the religious iconography of Stalin began, fuelled by rumours of a 'mysterious retreat' in 1941.

## **Chapter Three: Writing Like a Poet**

This chapter digs deeper into Stalin's writing, beginning with his habitual pattern of biblical and religious allusions. Above all, I am interested in his poetic style, especially in light of his early publications of widely-appreciated poetry. His later texts reveal subtle variations in the balanced sentences, his rhetorical if not homiletical ability, his evocation of imagery, and the ability to tell a story – most notably in the creation of the 'political myth' of the communist party and the victory of the October Revolution.

## **Chapter Four: Modalities of Dialectics**

Multiple modulations of dialectics appear in Stalin's works. These include the staples of subject-object and form-content, but also an early articulation of what would later be called 'constitutive resistance' (Negri). In this case, the resistance of the workers becomes the determining feature of

the constantly changing tactics of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie – initially on a national level but later in a world-historical form. The two major developments in dialectics are in terms of transcendence and immanence, and in a dialectic of crisis. The former refers to the relations between workers and the communist party, between theory and action, and between the party and the multi-ethnic state. The latter – dialectics of crisis – emerges in a complex pattern, particularly in light of the civil war, sustained international opposition, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The key to this dialectic is that the closer one's goal becomes, the more ferocious become internal and external opponents. This is at heart a theological dialectic. The more grace is apparent, the more active do the forces of evil become.

## **Chapter Five: Towards a Materialist Doctrine of Evil**

Crisis dialectics then leads to what I call a materialist doctrine of evil. This doctrine, worked out more in practice than theory – profoundly challenges the Enlightenment-inspired assumption of inherent human goodness so characteristic of many socialist movements. It entails a recalibration of the crucial opposition of good and evil, now in terms of socialism and capitalism, of workers and bosses, and of international politics. Above all, the Red Terror is the practical manifestation of this doctrine, in which good and evil are internal, with the one generating more of the other.

## **Chapter Six: Veneration and Demonisation**

No other political leader has been – and continues to be – as venerated and as reviled as Stalin. This is so in Russia, where he is reviled by some but revered by many others (even to the point of religious observances in his native Georgia), and internationally, where he functions either in terms of the *reductio ad Hitlerum* or as the architect of a stunning victory in WWII and in the construction of socialism. This chapter argues that such polarisation has a religious dynamic as well as a political one, in Cold War and post-Cold War contexts. In order to understand that polarisation, I trace the path from his near universal appreciation at the close of WWII to the growth of a 'black legend' after his death (thanks to Khrushchev's politically motivated 'secret report'). I also focus on the dynamics of this polarisation by relating it to theological issues, Lenin's veneration, the crucial role in extra-economic compulsion in the construction of socialism, the relation with Stalin's dialectics of intensified crisis, and particularly the central role of Stalin in assessing the continued validity of socialism.

Stalinist democracy

- [Stalinist democracy:](#)

Now there's an apparent oxymoron: Stalinist democracy. But Stalin has a strong position on democracy, socialist democracy that is. It may come as a surprise to some, but he is actually in favour of it.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the highest type of democracy in class society, the form of proletarian democracy, which expresses the interests of the majority (the exploited), in contrast to capitalist democracy, which expresses the interests of the minority (the exploiters).

This comment appears in a fascinating discussion with the first delegation from the USA to the USSR. The delegates ask sharp questions, relating to political parties, the press, religion, the party, world revolution and so on. And Stalin asks some incisive questions, especially concerning the absence of a workers party in the United States.

Back to socialist democracy. In the later discussion, Stalin outlines how voting works in the USSR:

In the U.S.S.R. the right to vote in the election of Soviets is enjoyed by the whole adult population from the age of eighteen, irrespective of sex or nationality—except for the bourgeois elements who exploit the labour of others and have been deprived of electoral rights. This makes a total of about sixty million voters. The overwhelming majority of these, of course, are peasants.

And then there are the endless committees, congresses and whatnot:

Finally, let us take the innumerable assemblies, conferences, delegate meetings, and so forth, which embrace vast masses of the working people, workers and peasants, both men and women, of all the nationalities included in the U.S.S.R. In Western countries, people sometimes wax ironical over these conferences and assemblies and assert that the Russians in general like to talk a lot. For us, however, these conferences and assemblies are of enormous importance, both as a means of testing the mood of the masses and as a means of exposing our mistakes and indicating the methods by which they can be rectified; for we make not a few mistakes and we do not conceal them, because we think that exposing mistakes and honestly correcting them is the best way to improve the administration of the country.

J. V. Stalin, Works, vol. 10, pp. 100, 113-14.

Updated outline of Saint Iosif: Stalin and Religion

- [Updated outline of Saint Iosif: Stalin and Religion](#)

As many may have been aware, I am working towards a book called Saint Iosif: Stalin and Religion. Preparation entails a careful reading of his written works, from which I have posted from time to time. To my knowledge, few actually read Stalin these days, and yet he is, for good or ill, possibly the most important communist of the twentieth century, precisely because he remains such a controversial figure. My approach deploys both critical commentary, with careful attention to his intimate connection with religious thought, and it works with and develops a translation model for understanding the subtle connections between Marxism and religion. The prime focus is Stalin's thought. Unlike the vast majority of studies on Stalin, I do not attempt to locate the tyrant in yet another way, now in terms of religious and philosophical thought. Rather, I take seriously Stalin the thinker, seeking to understand instead of praise or condemn. Such understanding extends to the very question of that polarisation, exploring the deeper reasons why he has been and continues to be venerated and demonized.

## **Chapter One: Setting the Scene: 'The Priest' and the Church**

This chapter functions as the background to understanding Stalin's texts. It deals with two items: Stalin's historic compact with the Russian Orthodox Church during the Second World War; and his theological study at the Tiflis Spiritual Seminary.

In 1943, Stalin made a historic compact with the Russian Orthodox Church (it may be traced back to the religious freedom clause of the 1936 constitution). In return for support of the war effort that eventually defeated Hitler, tens of thousands of churches were re-opened and the leadership hierarchy was re-established. In its turn, the church began to speak more openly of its support for the government (Acton and Stableford 2007, 71-74, 159-65). The result was that the church grew during Stalin's era. At that time too, rumours began circulating of Stalin's 1941 'mysterious retreat', leading to a tradition of iconography that continues to this day. Good work on the political realities has been done (Miner 2003), pointing out that these developments were not due to a need for religious nationalism or to foreign policy pressures in relation to religion. However, I am interested in the way these factors provide a background for core issues I explore later: religion and national question; the dialectics of crisis; and the polarisation of Stalin's image.

A second background factor attests to Stalin's uniqueness among world communist leaders: he studied theology for five years at the Tiflis Spiritual Seminary, the training college for priests in the Russian Orthodox Church. A brilliant student and notably devout, this deeply formative time (from the age of 15 to his 20th birthday, 1894-99) had a lasting effect. A careful analysis of the theological content of his studies reveals ecclesiastical history, liturgy, homiletics, dogma, comparative theology, moral theology, practical pastoral work, didactics, and the two staples: church singing and biblical studies. Years later, Stalin still memorised long passages from the Bible, annotated religious works in his library, and refused to include anti-religious works. These factors provide insights into his literary style, preference for biblical citations, and materialist doctrine of evil. It is not for nothing that in revolutionary circles he was known as 'The Priest'.

## **Chapter Two: Sentence Production and the Bible**

In light of the background material, this chapter delves deeply into Stalin's writing. It begins by focusing on form, specifically on the style of Stalin's sentence production. His style ranges from methodical analysis (evincing detailed preparation), through rhetorical if not homiletic subtlety, to poetic flights of imagery and the ability to tell a story – most notably in the long process of creating the 'political myth' of the communist party and the victory of the October Revolution. One factor that influenced such a style was his early poetry, which was published and widely-appreciated in Georgia (Rayfield 1985). Another factor is the cadence of biblical texts in his writings. In order to account for this influence, I analyse his habitual patterns of biblical and religious allusions.

## **Chapter Three: Religion and the National Question**

From the form of Stalin's writing, I move to content and theory. In this chapter, I focus on the intricate interweaving of the 'national question' and religion. As the preeminent theorist of the national question, Stalin initially set out to counter the position of the Bund – the General Jewish Labour Bund of Lithuania, Poland and Russia. However, in the end he adopted a modified

version of their proposal. In order to counter divisive nationalism, the Bund sought a federated system that recognised the distinctive ethnic, cultural and religious nature of each group. Over two decades (1905-24), Stalin developed a delicate dialectical argument that was based on voluntary unity through autonomous diversity. Eventually, his position became the foundation of the USSR's constitution (1924 and 1936) and of the first 'affirmative action empire' (Martin 2001). This entailed fostering languages, cultures, literature, education, religion and political leadership by local people. It also meant severe penalties for racial abuse. Further, Stalin saw the crucial implications for anti-colonial struggles around the world. Thus, the national question became internationalised. Throughout these developments, the question of religion was never far away. Practically, it appeared in the policies of allowing sharia law in Muslim-majority regions, as well as heavy penalties for anti-Semitism, especially in light of the many Jews in the Soviet administration. At a deeper level, the national question embodied Stalin's own way of working through to a position that resembled that of the Bund.

#### **Chapter Four: Modalities of Dialectics**

Dialectics may owe some debts to Hegel and Marx, but it also has a long pedigree in theology. Stalin deploys many variations on the dialectic: unity through diversity (and struggle); subjective and objective; form and content; legal and illegal; backwardness as the basis for leaping forward; revolution and counter-revolution; intensification of the dialectic before its resolution; and an early articulation of what would later be called 'constitutive resistance' (Negri). In this case, the resistance of the workers becomes the determining feature of the constantly changing tactics of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie – initially on a national level but later in a world-historical form. More importantly, Stalin develops the dialectic of transcendence and immanence, with distinct translations from the theological shape of this opposition. This applies to the relations between theory and action, but especially to relations between the communist party, on one side, and workers and peasants on the other. The party may appear to be transcendent, but when one perseveres long enough, it becomes immanent with workers and peasants. So also with workers and peasants: their position may initially seem to be immanent, but only through them does the transcendence of the party appear.

#### **Chapter Five: Dialectic of Crisis**

The most significant and sustained form of the dialectic is one of crisis. At its heart is the idea that the closer one's goal becomes, the more ferocious become internal and external opponents. The translation with theology is both clear and important: the more grace is apparent, the more active do the forces of evil become. And the closer one becomes, the clearer becomes the division between either-or. For Stalin, this dialectic of crisis is the basis for revolution. Indeed, this argument is Stalin's unique contribution to the theory of revolution itself.

#### **Chapter Six: Towards a Materialist Doctrine of Evil**

Crisis dialectics then leads to what I call a materialist doctrine of evil. This doctrine, worked out more in practice than theory, profoundly challenges the Enlightenment-inspired assumption of inherent human goodness so characteristic of many socialist movements. It entails a recalibration of the crucial opposition of good and evil, now in terms of socialism and capitalism, of workers

and bosses, and of international politics. Important features of the doctrine include external and internal dimensions. Externally, the reality was a situation of constant threat, by the sustained international blockade against the new Russia, which included support of the white armies, systematic sabotage and spying, and enfolded into the Cold War. Internally, the constant threat of a ‘fifth column’ was linked with the continuing elaboration of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the need for constant purges (Khlevniuk 2009, 169-79). In fact, the internal feature of the doctrine is its most powerful. Above all, the Red Terror, especially in the extensive purges of the late 1930s, is the practical manifestation of this doctrine: good and evil are internal, with the one generating more of the other.

## **Chapter Seven: Veneration and Demonization**

No other political leader has been – and continues to be – as venerated and as reviled as Stalin. This chapter moves from analysing Stalin’s thought to assess how he has been understood. It argues that the polarisation over Stalin constantly translates categories between religion and politics, in Cold War and post-Cold War contexts. This is so in Russia, where he is reviled by some but revered by many others (even to the point of religious observances in his native Georgia), and internationally, where he functions either in terms of the *reductio ad Hitlerum* or as the architect of a stunning victory in WWII and the builder of socialism. In order to understand that polarisation, I analyse the ‘foi furieuse’ of the new utopian project, which includes the foreign fascination with the new socialist experiment (David-Fox 2012), and its contrast in the many disappointments and eventual disillusionment with the project. Further, I deal with the path from his adulation in Russia and near universal appreciation at the close of WWII to the growth of a ‘black legend’ after his death (thanks to Khrushchev’s ‘secret report’ and Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt 1973 [1951])). I also assess the way such polarisation is manifested in critical work on Stalin, with many seeking to demonize him in new ways and others attempting to resurrect him (Volkogonov 1990, Radzinsky 1997, Viola 1996, 2007, Edele 2011, Losurdo 2008, Furr 2011, Zyuganov 2012). But my primary focus is how such polarisation illustrates the translatability of religious and political terms. Veneration and demonization operate between both languages, with neither language claiming priority. Indeed, the intersection between them creates the intensity of the polarisation.

The meaning of socialism in one country

- [The meaning of socialism in one country](#)

One of the tricks of developing new positions within a tradition is to assert your fidelity to the tradition while building a new argument out of the old. In the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin, the tradition was named ‘Leninism’, and each of course claimed to be the faithful interpreter of that tradition. On the matter of revolution, Trotsky argued that only a world-wide socialist revolution would secure socialism. And he could quote Lenin in support of that position. The reality was clearly otherwise, so Stalin argued – again interpreting Lenin – for the viability of socialism in one country. But what did that mean? Battening down the hatches and looking inward?

No, it actually drew on the image of a ‘light to the nations’ from Isaiah 49.



Soviet Russia was to be ‘living beacon illuminating the path to socialism’, ‘a torch which lights the path to liberation from the yoke of the oppressors for all the peoples of the world’. Or, to borrow a New Testament image, it was to be ‘light from the East’ (Works Vols 4: 62, 408, 181-86). Practically, that meant support for the many anti-colonial struggles throughout the world, a position Stalin first developed as a consequence of the ‘national question’ (or better ethnic diversity) in the USSR.

Stalin and the origins of post-colonialism

- [Stalin and the origins of post-colonialism:](#)

The pleasure increases with age: the discovery of unexpected ideas by means of disciplined and sustained reading. In this case I refer to Joseph Stalin and the origins of the connection between Marxism, anti-colonialism and thereby post-colonialism. Here I can spell out only the outlines of what will become a much longer argument.

As a preliminary note, we need to dispel the image popularised by the Trotskyites. The sneering dismissal of a ‘mediocre provincial’ says more about Trotsky’s own vanity than it does about Stalin[1] Even preliminary investigation reveals that Stalin was a very bright student, at both the church school he attended and the ‘Spiritual Seminary’ in Tiflis where he studied theology for six years. At the seminary he also wrote poetry, which has entered the anthologies of great Georgian literature. Anyone who studies the poems is struck by the delicate balance and linguistic purity of the writing[2] – features that also show up in his later written work.

However, it was the experience of crude Russification in Georgia that influenced Stalin most deeply on the national question. At the seminary, Georgian was forbidden even in everyday talk among the students. All texts, literature, and instruction were in Russian with a national imperialist focus. These experiences led to one of his early pieces on the ‘national question’, with the position outlined in full some years later in ‘Marxism and the National Question’.[3] Here he outlined what would become the basic position of the Bolsheviks: recognition and fostering of ethnic minorities, in terms of language, culture, literature, government, and religion. By this stage, he had already made clear his position on treatment of the Jews, among other groups, under the tsarist regime: ‘Groaning under the yoke are the eternally persecuted and humiliated Jews who lack even the miserably few rights enjoyed by other Russian subjects – the right to live in any part of the country they choose, the right to attend school, the right to be employed in government service, and so forth’.

All this is easy enough when one is involved in an underground, revolutionary group. What happens when you achieve power? After the October Revolution, Stalin was made People’s Commissar, with a specific focus on the ‘national question’. Now he had to deal with the complexities of the various situations. As the new government began enacting its policy, he found that bourgeois-aristocratic governments began to claim autonomy. So he stipulated that any claim to autonomy and self-determination had to come from a government established by workers and peasants – in Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus and so on. In the process of thinking through such matters, he formulated the dialectical position: ‘Thus, from the breakdown

of the old imperialist unity, through independent Soviet republics, the peoples of Russia are coming to a new, voluntary and fraternal unity'.[4]

Soon enough he was struck by a crucial insight: this position on the national question also applies to anti-colonial movements throughout the world. So he wrote in 1918 that the October Revolution 'has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed peoples, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism'.[5] If one supports the emancipation of ethnic minorities within the USSR, then the same should apply to any colonised place on the globe. This insight lay behind USSR's policy, already from this time, of supporting anti-colonial struggles around the world.

I cannot go into the detail and complexity of these issues here, such as the relationship with the international solidarity of the working class, the way socialism and nationalism come together in a new way in such formulations, the realities of a massive war effort, and so on. But I do need to ask how these insights have a bearing on post-colonialism. As any self-respecting account of the origins of post-colonialism shows, what we now call 'post-colonialism' has a longer history in the anti-colonial articulations of Marxism and the struggles it fostered. The names usually listed in such histories include Marx, Lenin, Frantz Fanon, W. E. B. DuBois and C. L. R. James, among others. Missing from this account is of course Stalin. Yet, it was Stalin who developed most fully and in the context of the actual experience of constructing socialism the deeper logic of Marxist anti-colonialism. The sensitivity to such issues may have arisen from his own intimate experiences in Georgia as a young man. But he worked through the complexities of the issue as he dealt with the realities of ethnic minorities in what would soon be called the USSR.

...Trotsky never did anything without a careful look in the mirror of history.

In defence of Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili (Stalin)

- [In defence of Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili \(Stalin\)?](#):

Those of you who know me may recall an occasional comment, 'Stalin's day will come', said half in jest. To be sure, Stalin has not had a good time in the minds of those who write the history books. Madman, butcher, paranoid dictator, responsible for countless deaths, proponent of the personality cult (his own), the only realistic contender with Hitler for the most evil man of the twentieth century. The right puts him forward as the logical outcome of communism; the left shies away, arguing he was an anomaly. So what is there to defend?

Let me be clear, Stalin made plenty of mistakes, from Lysenko to the Moscow trials, but was also responsible for at least two significant achievements – apart from studying theology (he was unable to sit his final exams since his parents couldn't pay the fees).

The first was the collectivisation drive in the early 1930s. Collectivisation? Yes, since it was unfinished business from the revolution.

For the sake of the ‘civil’ war and the need to get the Soviet economy kicking, as well as come up with the bare modicum of grain needed to ward off the worst of the famines produced by the ‘civil’ war, Lenin relinquished his desire for collectivisation. So, when the NEP was winding down in the late 20s, Stalin issued an order in 1927 that collectivisation was to restart. Why? Grain production was falling short by about 20 million tons, needed to feed Russia itself, largely due to old peasant methods of agriculture that were becoming increasingly inefficient. However, the order was ignored and the shortages got worse, kulaks (rich peasants) began stockpiling grain and pushing up the prices, so the next year Stalin announced collectivisation would be enforced. In response, the peasants burned crops and barns and killed their animals. Stalin followed Lenin’s path for a short while, allowing small-hold production to continue. But in 1932 he lost patience and ordered full enforcement. By the end of the year, 67% of farms were collectivised, but peasants continued to burn crops and stockpile. Famine got worse in 1932-3, so now Stalin really got the shits: he rounded up the kulaks and used that tried and true Russian method of more than two centuries – he sent them off to populate (and perish in) Siberia. Meanwhile, by 1939, 99% of Russian farms were collectivised, modernised and were using machinery.

So was it a failure? Let’s look at the following statistics:

In 1928, 73 million tons of grain were produced.

In 1933, at the height of the struggle, 69 million tons were grown.

However, by 1937, the yield was 97 million tons.

In other words, on the eve of the Second World War, production had increased by more than 24 million tons, or by about 33%. It needed a man with a bite as strong as his bark to get it done. Along with the massive reorganisation of industrial production, this put the USSR in a very strong position to resist Hitler’s attack in 1941.

Before I get to that, however, let us look at the political situation. By the late twenties, Stalin was still following Bolshevik policy outlined by Lenin: avoid violence and allowing the peasants to keep small-hold farms and use old methods. In opposition were Trotsky and Zinoviev, who urged collectivisation. But now Stalin outfoxed the left opposition, taking over their policy with gusto. They were left with no room to move, and many Trots ended up getting behind Stalin on this one.

What about the war? I have already posted on this, but now a few more details. We can thank the man with the fried egg on his forehead, Gorbachev, for this one, since he opened the archives to foreign historians. Since then, they have been rewriting the history of World War II, since the Soviets kept far better records than anyone. Up until then, three factors had influenced the understanding of the war. First, Churchill in his ‘history’ had played down the Soviet involvement, arguing that the war was won on the western front (Churchill appropriately won the Nobel Prize for ‘literature’ – it was largely a fabrication). Second, western historians relied on what the German generals told them. Good move that one, since we got fables about the Russian rabble, unarmed soldiers, machine-gun fodder and so on. And they stressed Hitler’s mismanagement, the size of the Red Army, and that their supply-lines were too long.

Incidentally, the USA employed former Wehrmacht officers to provide them with information on the new Cold War enemy. One of them, Franz Halder, was Hitler's chief of the Army General Staff from 1938 to 1942 and was complicit in the effort to wipe out Jews, gypsies, gays and communists. After the war, he was head of the project on the USSR in the US Army's Historical Division. And for his wonderful contribution, John F. Kennedy gave him the Meritorious Civilian Service. Third, Krushchev is at fault here as well, since in his famous speech in 1956 he blamed Stalin for everything, with the result that Soviet historians came up with their own version of the war: despite Stalin's idiocy, the good, solid Russian people won the war on their own.

All of that is now so much rubbish. While the Left has been focusing on politics and avoiding Stalin, the war historians have been providing a completely different picture of Stalin during the war. David Glantz, Mark Harrison, Nikolai Litvin, Anthony Beavor, Catherine Merridale, Rodric Braithwaite, Omer Bartov, Wolfram Wette (who has showed that German officers in general and not merely the SS freely engaged in murder and genocide), Christopher Browning, Saul Friedländer, Richard Overy, Evan Mawdsley, Geoffrey Roberts and Norman Davies – all have been using the wealth of material now available.

The result: it was Stalin's war and he won it. Over 400 divisions battled on a 1600 km front for four years, compared to 15 each for the Germans and allies on the western front at its most intense. 88% of German military dead fell on the eastern front, and the battle that broke the Wehrmacht was Kursk, in July and August of 1943. Here the Russians showed everyone how to beat a blitzkrieg – with a meticulously planned, flexible and in-depth defence. By comparison, the British, American, Australian, Canadian etc contribution on the western front was a sideshow.

However, Stalin didn't start off well, trying to run the whole show himself, misjudging German attacks in 1941 and 1942, and launching ineffective counter-attacks. Then he sat back, puffed through a few pipes full and had a good think. The result was a transformed man: he called on his most creative generals, engaged in extraordinary efforts to rally the people, and became adept at high diplomacy. For example, at the end of the war at the Yalta Conference (4-11 February, 1945), he had obtained information that the good Winston Churchill didn't mind and tipple or three. So Churchill was plied with grog, got plastered, and Stalin got a very good deal indeed.

Meanwhile, back in 1942, a well-organised, equipped, supplied and trained Red Army began winning battles, from Stalingrad onwards. They waged increasingly sophisticated 'deep operations', namely, rapid, multiply-arms advances that pushed deep into the Wehrmacht's rear, inflicting creative and utterly debastating defeats, much greater than any army in the war. And the responsibility for these stunning successes was Stalin's. He fostered and was part of a dynamic, flexible and innovative team, discussing, debating and planning each move. So much so that historians now use phrases such as 'awesome military achievement' and 'greatest military victory in history'.

Maybe Stalin's day has come.

Stalin, the economic whizz-kid?

- [Stalin, the economic whizz-kid?](#)

The usual story about the dreadful era under Stalin is that it was an economic disaster, that collectivisation led to massive famines and economic hardship. I have addressed the recovery of Stalin as an innovative and dynamic war leader a little earlier – a recovery brought about by war historians rather than political analysts or even Marxists, who shy away from the man with the moustache like Australians from a visit of the English queen.

But let us look another interesting piece of information: a graph tracing the percentage of world GDP, along with population.

What's interesting about this graph is not that it comes from a source not particularly favourable to our man – the Financial Times. It takes little effort to notice the peak under Stalin – 10% of global GDP, second only to the USA. Those war historians have wondered why the USSR was able to recover so quickly after Hitler's devastating invasion. Perhaps an answer lies here, in the deep reorganisation of industry and agriculture known as collectivisation. It also makes it perfectly clear that 1991 was catastrophic for Russia's economy, a situation from which it has not recovered, for now it produces a little over 2% of global GDP.

A collection of books

- One comrade posted ["A collection of Soviet history books on Stalin and Stalinism"](#) but the file as since expired. The file had the following books:
  1. Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia
  2. Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936
  3. Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s
  4. The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939
  5. Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization
  6. Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941
  7. Stalin: A New History
  8. Stalin: Man of Contradiction
  9. Stalinism: New Directions
  10. Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives
  11. Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared
  12. The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia: Volume 5, The Years of Hunger Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933

Mao's Evaluations of Stalin

- [Mao's Evaluations of Stalin](#)

The Single Spark web site is sponsoring a collective investigation and reappraisal of Stalin, and the Soviet Union in his times, from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. As such, it

seems appropriate to start by first reviewing the various evaluations and criticisms of Stalin that Mao himself made over the years. We are not assuming that these comments are what our own final appraisal of Stalin should be exclusively based on. The passage of time and the opening up of Soviet archives, and a large amount of additional critical commentary from a variety of perspectives has given us the resources on which to base a more objective evaluation than was possible in Mao's day. But Mao's comments nevertheless form a good initial orientation for us as we begin our investigations.

The excerpts below do not include every single reference to Stalin by Mao, but they do include all of them we have located which could be deemed to explicitly or implicitly evaluate Stalin in some significant way. (If you know of others, please email us!) Most of these comments, however, were not meant to be all-sided evaluations of Stalin, and all of them are the products of their times. In most cases these comments below are excerpts from larger documents, but an attempt has been made to include enough of the context so that the remarks are clear. The unattributed words in brackets are clarifying remarks that were inserted by the editors of the different editions of Mao's writings. Our own editorial clarifications are also in brackets and are signed "Ed." The English source editions used are listed at the end of this document.

Many of these quotations come originally from various Red Guard editions of Mao's writings which were published during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-69). These editions sometimes contain only portions of a particular work and therefore it is necessary to consult more than one edition. Moreover, some of Mao's speeches are only known to us through notes that were prepared by listeners. Although these notes are generally pretty carefully done, there are in some cases different versions of the notes which do show considerable differences between them. As might be expected, there are also sometimes different translations of Mao's writings into English which show some differences. And, finally, some of Mao's writings as officially published by the Chinese government—especially volume V of the Selected Works which was published after Mao's death—have been expurgated or changed to reflect the political line of the CPC at the time they were published. For all these reasons there are sometimes different "versions" available of particular works by Mao, as will be seen below.

In part II below we attempt a summary of Mao's criticisms of Stalin by specific topic.

## Part I: Mao's Evaluations of Stalin (In Order by Date)

"Generally speaking, all Communist Party members who have a certain capacity for study should study the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, study the history of our nation, and study the circumstances and trends of current movements; moreover, they should serve to educate members with a lower cultural level....

"The theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin are universally applicable. We should not regard their theories as dogma but as a guide to action." —"On the New Stage" (Oct. 12-14, 1938), MRP6, p. 537. In a slightly different translation in SW2, pp. 208-9.

[Edgar Snow writing:] "On another occasion I asked Mao whether, in his opinion, Russia's occupation of Poland was primarily justified by strategic-military necessity or political necessity.

“Mao seemed to think that the governing factor was strategic necessity, but that the move was partly military and partly political. The political side was not related directly to the world condition of the revolutionary movement but to the Soviet Union’s historic relations with Eastern Poland. The Soviet-German Pact, on the other hand, was not political but a strategic-military necessity. Stalin wanted it in order to block Chamberlain’s effort to build a coalition against Russia. Mao claimed that Chamberlain had clearly indicated to Hitler that he had to make a choice between fighting Russia or fighting England. If Hitler attacked Russia, Chamberlain was prepared to tolerate his occupation of Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and the Baltic states. If not, he would use Poland to oppose Hitler. Stalin was then compelled to seek his own agreement with Hitler.”

—Edgar Snow’s report of an interview with Mao, in “Interviews with Edgar Snow” (Sept. 24-26), 1939), MRP7, p. 229. Thus according to Snow, Mao fully supported Stalin’s decision to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany and to occupy eastern Poland. (See also pp. 221-228 of the Snow interviews.)

“December 21 of this year is Comrade Stalin’s sixtieth birthday. It can be anticipated that this birthday will call forth warm and affectionate congratulations in the hearts of all those people in the world who are aware of this event and who know suffering.

“To congratulate Stalin is not merely doing something to observe the occasion. To congratulate Stalin means to support him, to support his cause, to support the cause of the Soviet Union, to support the victory of socialism, to support the orientation he points out for humanity, and to support our own close friend. Today in the world the great majority of humanity is suffering and only by following the orientation pointed out by Stalin, and with Stalin’s aid, can humanity be rescued from disaster.

“We Chinese people are now living in a time of profound calamity unprecedented in history, a time when help from others is most urgently needed. The Book of Poetry says, ‘Ying goes its cry, seeking with its voice its companion.’ We are precisely at such a juncture.

“But who are our friends?

“There is one kind of so-called friends who style themselves our friends, and some among us also unthinkingly call them friends. But such friends can only be classed with Li Linfu of the Tang dynasty. Li Linfu was a prime minister of the Tang dynasty, a notorious man who was described as having ‘honey dripping from his tongue and a sword concealed in his heart.’ These friends today are precisely friends with ‘honey dripping from their tongues and swords concealed in their hearts.’ Who are these people? Part of those imperialists who say that they sympathize with China.

“There is another kind of friends who are different; they have real sympathy for us, and regard us as brothers. Who are these people? They are the Soviet Union, and Stalin.

“Not a single country has renounced its special rights and privileges in China; only the Soviet Union has done this.

“At the time of the Northern Expedition, all the imperialists opposed us, and the Soviet Union alone assisted us.

“Since the beginning of the anti-Japanese war, not a single government of any imperialist country has really helped us. The Soviet Union alone has helped us with its great resources in men, materiel, and money.

“Is this not clear enough?

“To the cause of the liberation of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people, only the socialist country, the socialist leaders, the socialist people, and socialist thinkers, statesmen, and toilers are truly giving assistance. Without their help, it is impossible to win final victory.

“Stalin is the true friend of the Chinese nation and of the cause of the liberation of the Chinese people. The Chinese people’s love and respect for Stalin, and our friendship for the Soviet Union, are wholly sincere. Any attempt, from whatever quarter, to sow dissension by rumor-mongering and slander will be of no avail in the end.”

—“Stalin Is the Friend of the Chinese People” (Dec. 20, 1939), MRP7, pp. 307-308, in full. A different translation is available in SW2, pp. 335-6.

“Today we are holding a meeting to congratulate Stalin on his sixtieth birthday. ‘From ancient times, few men have reached the age of seventy,’ and living to the age of sixty is also rare. But why do we celebrate only Stalin’s birthday? And why, moreover, are such celebrations taking place not only in Yan’an but in the whole country and in the whole world? Provided only that they know who the man is who was born this day, provided that they know what manner of man he is, then all those who suffer oppression will congratulate him. The reason is that Stalin is the savior of all the oppressed. What kind of people are opposed to congratulating him and do not like to congratulate him? Only those who do not suffer oppression but, on the contrary, oppress other people, first of all, the imperialists. Comrades! A foreigner, who is separated from us by thousands of miles, and whose birthday is celebrated by everyone—is this not an unprecedented event?

“This is because he is leading the great Soviet Union, because he is leading the great Communist International, because he is leading the cause of the liberation of all mankind, and is helping China to fight Japan.

“At present, the whole world is divided into two fronts struggling against each other. On the one side is imperialism, which represents the front of the oppressors. On the other side is socialism, which represents the front of resistance to oppression. Some people imagine that the national-revolutionary front in the colonies and semicolonies occupies an intermediate position, but its enemy is imperialism, and hence it cannot do otherwise than call upon the friendship of socialism, and it cannot but belong to the revolutionary front of resistance to the oppressors. China’s diehards imagine that they can play the harlot and, at the same time, set up arches in honor of their own virtue, fighting communism with one hand, and resisting Japan with the other. They call themselves the middle-of-the-road faction, but they will never achieve their aims. If



they do not repent, they will certainly end by going over to the side of counterrevolution. Both the revolutionary and the counterrevolutionary fronts must have someone to act as their leader, someone to serve as their commander. Who is the commander of the counterrevolutionary front? It is imperialism, it is Chamberlain. Who is the commander of the revolutionary front? It is socialism, it is Stalin. Comrade Stalin is the leader of the world revolution. This is an extremely important circumstance. Among the whole human race, this man, Stalin, has appeared, and this is a very great event. Because he is there, it is easier to get things done. As you know, Marx is dead, and Engels and Lenin too are dead. If there were no Stalin, who would give the orders? This is indeed a fortunate circumstance. Because there is now in the world a Soviet Union, a Communist Party, and a Stalin, the affairs of this world can be dealt with more easily. What does a revolutionary commander do? He sees to it that everyone has food to eat, clothes to wear, a place to live, and books to read. And in order to achieve this, he must lead a billion and more people to struggle against the oppressors and bring them to a final victory. This is precisely what Stalin wants to do. Since this is the case, should not all those who suffer oppression congratulate Stalin? I think they should, I think they must. We should congratulate him, support him and study him.

“The two aspects of Stalin which we want to study are the doctrinal aspect and the practical aspect.

“There are innumerable principles of Marxism, but in the final analysis they can be summed up in one sentence: ‘To rebel is justified.’ For thousands of years everyone said, ‘Oppression is justified, exploitation is justified, rebellion is not justified.’ From the time that Marxism appeared on the scene, this old judgment was turned upside down, and this is a great contribution. This principle was derived by the proletariat from its struggles, but Marx drew the conclusion. In accordance with this principle, there was then resistance, there was struggle, and socialism was realized. What is Comrade Stalin’s contribution? He developed this principle, developed Marxism-Leninism, and produced a very clear, concrete, and living doctrine for the oppressed people of the whole world. This is the complete doctrine for establishing a revolutionary front, overthrowing imperialism, overthrowing capitalism, and establishing a socialist society.

“The practical aspect consists in turning doctrine into reality. Neither Marx, Engels, nor Lenin carried to completion the cause of the establishment of socialism, but Stalin did so. This is a great and unprecedented exploit. Before the Soviet Union’s two five-year plans, the capitalist newspapers of various countries proclaimed daily that the Soviet Union was in desperate straits, that socialism could not be relied upon, but what do we see today? Chamberlain’s mouth has been stopped, as have the mouths of those Chinese diehards. They all recognize that the Soviet Union has triumphed.

“Apart from helping us from the doctrinal standpoint in our War of Resistance Against Japan, Stalin has also given us practical and concrete aid. Since the victory of Stalin’s cause, he has aided us with many airplanes, cannons, aviators, and military advisers in every theater of operations, as well as lending us money. What other country in the world has helped us in this way? What country in the world, led by what class, party, or individual, has helped us in this way? Who is there, apart from the Soviet Union, the proletariat, the Communist Party, and Stalin?

“At present, there are people who call themselves our friends, but in fact they can only be classed with Li Linfu of the Tang dynasty. This Mr. Li Linfu was a man who had ‘honey dripping from his tongue and a sword concealed in his heart.’ The imperialists all have honey dripping from their tongues and swords concealed in their hearts, and Chamberlain is a present-day Li Linfu. What imperialist country has abolished the special privileges enjoyed by many countries in China such as the right to station troops, consular jurisdiction, extraterritoriality, and so on? Not a single one. Only the Soviet Union has abolished them.

“In the past, Marxism-Leninism provided theoretical guidance to the world revolution. Today something has been added: it is possible to give material aid to the world revolution. This is Stalin’s great contribution.

“After we have celebrated Stalin’s birthday, we must continue to carry out propaganda among the people of the whole country to make these facts known. We must explain things clearly to the 450 million Chinese, so that our whole people understands: only the socialist Soviet Union, only Stalin, are the good friends of China.”

—Speech at a Meeting of All Circles in Yan’an to Commemorate Stalin’s Sixtieth Birthday (Dec. 21, 1939), MRP7, pp. 309-11, in full.

[In “On New Democracy”, Mao quotes approvingly two long passages from Stalin on the national question and with respect to the significance of the October Revolution for revolution in China and the East. Mao prefaced these passages with the following:]

“The correct thesis that ‘the Chinese revolution is part of the world revolution’ was put forward as early as 1924-27 during the period of China’s First Great Revolution. It was put forward by the Chinese Communists and endorsed by all those taking part in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle of the time....

“This correct thesis advanced by the Chinese Communists is based on Stalin’s theory.”

—“On New Democracy” (Jan. 1940), SW2, pp. 345-6.

“As for education for cadres whether at work or in schools for cadres, a policy should be established of focusing such education on the study of the practical problems of the Chinese revolution and using the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism as the guide, and the method of studying Marxism-Leninism statically and in isolation should be discarded. Moreover, in studying Marxism-Leninism, we should use the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course as the principle material. It is the best synthesis and summing-up of the world communist movement of the past hundred years, a model of the integration of theory and practice, and so far the only comprehensive model in the whole world. When we see how Lenin and Stalin integrated the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete practice of the Soviet revolution and thereby developed Marxism, we shall know how we should work in China.”

—“Reform Our Study” (May 1941), SW3, p. 24.

“I believe we should do things honestly, for without an honest attitude it is absolutely impossible to accomplish anything in this world. Which are the honest people? Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin are honest, men of science are honest. Which are the dishonest people? Trotsky, Bukharin, Chen Tu-hsiu and Chang Kuo-tao are extremely dishonest...” —“Rectify the Party’s Style of Work” (Feb. 1, 1942), SW3, p. 44.

[Excerpt from *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* quoting Mao’s private reaction to the first of two telegrams Stalin sent him urging him to personally go to Chongqing (Chungking) for negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek.]

“In the first cable (dated August 22 [1945]), Stalin said that China must hold to the road of peaceful development, that he believed the Nationalists and the Communists should reach a peace accord because a civil war would destroy the Chinese nation, and that, accordingly, he thought both Zhou [Enlai] and Mao should go to Chongqing. After receiving Stalin’s cable, an angry Mao remarked, ‘I simply don’t believe that the nation will perish if the people stand up and struggle [against the Nationalist government].’”

—UP, p. 7. Ed. note: Later on (in early 1948) Stalin admitted that he was wrong in initially opposing the Chinese revolution in the period after World War II. Milovan Djilas reports him as saying: “True, we, too, can make a mistake! Here, when the war with Japan ended, we invited the Chinese comrades to reach an agreement as to how a *modus vivendi* with Chiang Kai-shek might be found. They agreed with us in word, but in deed they did it their own way when they got home: they mustered their forces and struck. It has been shown that they were right, and not we.” [Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, p. 182.] Later still, on July 27, 1949, as the Chinese revolution was on the verge of complete victory, the authors of *Uncertain Partners* say that while speaking to a CPC delegation in Moscow Stalin “admitted that he was not ‘too well versed’ in Chinese affairs and may have caused obstacles in the Chinese revolution.” [UP, p. 73.]

[Mao quotes a passage from Stalin written in 1918 which includes the remark that the Great October Socialist Revolution “has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East, having created a new front of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed peoples of the East.” Mao then continues:]

“History has developed in the direction pointed out by Stalin. The October Revolution has opened up wide possibilities for the emancipation of the peoples of the world and opened up the realistic paths towards it; it has created a new front of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed peoples of the East. This front of revolutions has been created and developed under the brilliant guidance of Lenin and, after Lenin’s death, of Stalin.”

—“Revolutionary Forces of the World Unite, Fight Against Imperialist Aggression!” (Nov. 1948), SW4, pp. 283-4.

[The authors of UP writing:] “In the late 1940s and well into the 1950s, Mao and other Chinese Party leaders repeatedly contended that Mikoyan [in his secret visit on Stalin’s behalf to Mao in

early 1949] had recommended that the PLA not cross the Yangtze. That advice they charged up primarily to three reasons. First of all, the Soviets had simply erred in their estimate of the PLA and believed it could not defeat the Nationalists. Marshal Nie Rong-zhen comments that Stalin, lacking confidence in the military power of the Chinese Communists, ‘was somewhat like the ancient man of Qi who was worried that the sky might fall anytime.’ Fear that the crossing would raise the danger of U.S. armed intervention was the second reason, and, third, Stalin wanted to split China in half, creating conflicting ‘Northern and Southern Dynasties,’ the better to control the Communist half. [UP, p. 42. The UP authors go on to suggest that they have doubts about the truth of this story, but provide the following references in support of it:]

[The UP authors continuing in a footnote on p. 306:] “Mao’s first known statement on the ‘Northern and Southern Dynasties’ was made in the spring of 1949, when he said: ‘Some friends abroad half believe and half disbelieve in our victory. [They are] persuading us to stop here and make the Yangtze River a border with Chiang, to create the “Northern and Southern Dynasties.”’ ... In 1954, Zhou Enlai told Liu Xiao, the new ambassador to the Soviet Union, that Stalin had ‘sent a representative to Xibaipo [i.e., Mikoyan’s secret visit in Jan.-Feb. 1949 —Ed.] principally for the purpose of understanding the situation in the Chinese revolution and the points of view from our side.... The Soviet Union was dissatisfied [with our intention to liberate all China] and demanded that we “stop the civil war.” In fact the Soviet Union attempted to create the “Northern and Southern Dynasties,” namely two Chinas.’ ... Mao referred to this same issue on April 11, 1957.”

[However, a cable from Stalin to Mao in April, 1949, just before the PLA crossed the Yangtze, shows that Stalin did not at that time oppose the crossing, though he still urged caution. On the other hand, not long before sending that cable Stalin was apparently still trying to mediate an end to the civil war and keep China divided. See UP, pp. 43-44.]

“As everyone knows, our Party passed through these twenty-eight years not in peace but amid hardships, for we had to fight enemies, both foreign and domestic, both inside and outside the Party. We thank Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin for giving us a weapon. This weapon is not a machine-gun, but Marxism-Leninism.”

—“On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship” (June 30, 1949), SW4, p. 412.

“World War I shook the whole globe. The Russians made the October Revolution and created the world’s first socialist state. Under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, the revolutionary energy of the great proletariat and laboring people of Russia, hitherto latent and unseen by foreigners, suddenly erupted like a volcano, and the Chinese and all mankind began to see the Russians in a new light. Then, and only then, did the Chinese enter an entirely new era in their thinking and their life. They found Marxism-Leninism, the universally applicable truth, and the face of China began to change.

“It was through the Russians that the Chinese found Marxism. Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only ignorant of Lenin and Stalin, they did not even know of Marx and Engels. The salvoes of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism.”

—Ibid., p. 413.

“We must not put on bureaucratic airs. If we dig into a subject for several months, for a year or two, for three or five years, we shall eventually master it. At first some of the Soviet Communists also were not very good at handling economic matters and the imperialists awaited their failure too. But the Communist Party of the Soviet Union emerged victorious and, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, it learned not only how to make the revolution but also how to carry on construction. It has built a great and splendid socialist state. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is our best teacher and we must learn from it.”

—Ibid., p. 423.

“After the October Socialist Revolution, the Soviet government, following the policies of Lenin and Stalin, took the lead in abrogating the unequal treaties [concluded] with China under Imperial Russia. Over a period of almost thirty years, the Soviet people and the Soviet government have, on several occasions, assisted the Chinese people in their cause of liberation. The Chinese people will never forget that in the midst of their ordeals they received such fraternal friendship of the Soviet people and the Soviet government.

“...I am confident that with the victory of the Chinese People’s Revolution and the founding of the Chinese People’s Republic, with the joint efforts of the New Democracies and the peace loving peoples of the world, with the common aspirations and close cooperation of [our] two great countries, China and the Soviet Union, and especially with the correct international policies of Generalissimo Stalin, these tasks will certainly be fully carried out and excellent results will be attained.

“Long live the friendship and cooperation of China and the Soviet Union!”

—Speech on Arrival at Moscow Train Station (Dec. 16, 1949), WMZ1, p. 51.

“Dear comrades and friends:

“I am genuinely pleased to have the chance to join this distinguished gathering in celebration of the seventieth birthday of Comrade Stalin.

“Comrade Stalin is a teacher and friend of the people of the world as well as a teacher and friend of the Chinese people. He has further developed the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism and has made extremely outstanding and extensive contributions to the cause of the world Communist movement. In the arduous struggle to resist their oppressors, the Chinese people have become deeply appreciative of the importance of Comrade Stalin’s friendship.

“At this distinguished gathering, on behalf of the Chinese people and the Communist Party of China, I congratulate Comrade Stalin on his seventieth birthday and wish him health and longevity. We wish well-being, strength, and prosperity to our great friend, the Soviet Union under the leadership of Comrade Stalin. We hail the great unprecedented solidarity of the working class in the world under the leadership of Comrade Stalin.

“Long live the great Stalin, leader of the world’s working class and of the international Communist movement!”

“Long live the Soviet Union, the stronghold of world peace and democracy!”

—Address at Birthday Celebration Meeting Held for Stalin (Dec. 21, 1949), WMZ1, pp. 52-3, in full. [Although this tribute sounds effusive to us today, when compared to the other speeches from Communist leaders present at Stalin’s birthday celebration it sounds quite restrained and subdued. The authors of UP comment: “In his speech, Mao was lukewarm in his praise of Stalin, describing him as ‘great,’ as opposed to the glowing terms used by all the other foreign leaders: ‘genius,’ ‘genial thinker and leader,’ ‘genial teacher,’ and ‘genial warrior.’” (UP, p. 317, note 80. ‘Genial’, in this context does not mean “friendly”, but rather “of genius”; thus a ‘genial thinker’ is a “thinker of genius”.) Mao’s speech was nevertheless well received. —Ed.]

“Comrade Stalin and many foreign comrades all feel that the victory of the Chinese revolution is an extremely great one.”

—“Don’t Attack on All Fronts” (June 6, 1950), WMZ1, p. 104.

“Comrade Shvernik:

“It was with boundless grief that the Chinese people, the Chinese government, and I myself learned the news of the passing away of the Chinese people’s closest friend and great teacher, Comrade Stalin. This is an inestimable loss, not only for the people of the Soviet Union, but for the Chinese people, for the entire camp of peace and democracy, and for peace-loving people through the world. On behalf of the Chinese people, the Chinese government, and on my own behalf, I extend to you and to the people and government of the Soviet Union our deepest condolences.

“The victory of the Chinese people’s revolution is absolutely inseparable from Comrade Stalin’s unceasing care, leadership, and support of over thirty years. Since the victory of the Chinese people’s revolution, Comrade Stalin and the people and government of the Soviet Union, under his leadership, have rendered generous and selfless assistance to the Chinese people’s cause of construction. Such a great and profound friendship as that which Comrade Stalin had for the Chinese people will be forever remembered with gratitude by the Chinese people. The immortal beacon of Comrade Stalin will forever illuminate the path on which the Chinese people march forward.”

—Telegram to the USSR on Stalin’s Death (March 6, 1953), WMZ1, p. 327.

“Generalissimo Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of our great ally the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, unfortunately passed away at 9:50 p.m. (Moscow time), March 5, 1953. In order to express the Chinese people’s immensely profound mourning [at the demise] of our great Comrade Stalin, the great leader of the world’s laboring people and the most

respected and beloved friend and mentor of the Chinese people, and in order to express the Chinese people's reverence for the leader of our great ally, it is hereby decreed that:

"1. From March 7 to March 9, 1953, flags shall fly at half-mast throughout our country as a symbol of mourning;

"2. In this period of mourning, all factories, mines, enterprises, units of the armed forces, government organs, schools, and people's organizations shall suspend all banquets and [other] forms of entertainment."

—Central People's Government's Decree on Stalin's Death (March 6, 1953), WMZ1, p. 328, in full.

"Comrade Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, the greatest genius of the present age, the great teacher of the world Communist movement, and the comrade-in-arms of the immortal Lenin, has departed from the world.

"Comrade Stalin's contribution to our era through his theoretical activities and practice is incalculable. Comrade Stalin represented our entire new age. His activities have led the Soviet people and the working people of all countries to turn around the whole world situation. That is to say, the cause of justice and of People's Democracy and socialism has achieved victory in an immense region of the world, a region embracing more than 800 million people—one third of the earth's population. Moreover, the influence of this victory is daily spreading to every corner of the world.

"The death of Comrade Stalin has caused the laboring people of the whole world to feel unparalleled and profound grief; it has stirred the hearts of just people throughout the world. This demonstrates that Comrade Stalin's cause and his thought have gripped the broad masses of the people throughout the world and have already become an invincible force, a force that will guide those people who have already achieved victory in achieving still more fresh victories, one after another, and, at the same time, will guide all those people who are still groaning under the oppression of the evil old world of capitalism so that they can strike courageously at the enemies of the people.

"After the death of Lenin, Comrade Stalin led the Soviet people in building into a magnificent socialist society the first socialist state in the world, which he, together with the great Lenin, created at the time of the October Revolution. The victory of socialist construction in the Soviet Union was not only a victory for the people of the Soviet Union, but also a common victory for the people of the whole world. First, this victory proved in the most real-life terms the infinite correctness of Marxism-Leninism and concretely educated working people through the world on how they should advance toward a good life. Second, this victory ensured that during the Second World War humanity would have the strength to defeat the Fascist beast. The achievement of victory in the anti-Fascist war would have been inconceivable without the victory of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. The fate of all humanity was bound up with the victory of socialist construction in the Soviet Union and victory in the anti-Fascist war, and the glory for these victories should be attributed to our great Comrade Stalin.

“Comrade Stalin developed Marxist-Leninist theory in a comprehensive and epoch-making way and propelled the development of Marxism to a new stage. Comrade Stalin creatively developed Lenin’s theory concerning the law of the uneven development of capitalism and the theory that it is possible for socialism to first achieve victory in one country; Comrade Stalin creatively contributed the theory of the general crisis of the capitalist system; he contributed the theory concerning the building of communism in the Soviet Union; he contributed the theory of the fundamental economic laws of present-day capitalism and of socialism; he contributed the theory of revolution in colonies and semi-colonies. Comrade Stalin also creatively developed Lenin’s theory of party-building. All these creative theories of Comrade Stalin’s further united the workers throughout the world, further united the oppressed classes and oppressed people throughout the world, thereby enabling the struggle of the world’s working class and all oppressed people for liberation and well-being and the victories in this struggle to reach unprecedented proportions.

“All of Comrade Stalin’s writings are immortal documents of Marxism. His works, *The Foundations of Leninism*, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Bolshevik]*, and his last great work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, constitute an encyclopedia of Marxism-Leninism, a synthesis of the experience of the world Communist movement of the past hundred years. His speech at the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is a precious last testament bequeathed to the Communists of all the countries of the world. We Chinese Communists, like the Communists of all countries, search for our own road to victory in the great works of Comrade Stalin.

“Since the death of Lenin, Comrade Stalin has always been the central figure in the world Communist movement. We rallied around him, constantly asked his advice, and constantly drew ideological strength from his works. Comrade Stalin was full of warmth for the oppressed peoples of the East. ‘Do not forget the East’—this was Comrade Stalin’s great call after the October Revolution. Everyone knows that Comrade Stalin warmly loved the Chinese people and regarded the might of the Chinese revolution as incalculable. On the question of the Chinese revolution, he contributed his exalted wisdom. It was by following the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, along with having the support of the great Soviet state and all the revolutionary forces of other countries, that the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people achieved their historic victory a few years ago.

“Now we have lost our great teacher and most sincere friend—Comrade Stalin. What a misfortune this is! The sorrow that this misfortune has brought us cannot be described in words.

“Our task is to transform sorrow into strength. In memory of our great teacher Stalin, the great friendship between the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people [on the one hand] and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people [on the other] formed in the name of Stalin will never cease to be strengthened. The Chinese Communists and the Chinese people will further intensify the study of Stalin’s teachings and the study of Soviet science and technology in order to build our country.

“The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is a party nurtured personally by Lenin and Stalin; it is the most advanced, the most experienced, and the most theoretically cultivated party in the



world. This party has been our model in the past, is our model at present, and will still be our model in the future. We fully believe that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the government of the Soviet Union headed by Comrade Malenkov will definitely be able to carry on Comrade Stalin's unfinished work and push the great cause of Communism forward and carry it to greater and more glorious development.

"There is not the slightest doubt that the camp of world peace, democracy, and socialism headed by the Soviet Union will become even more united and even more powerful.

"In the past thirty years, Comrade Stalin's teachings and the model of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union have facilitated a major step forward for the world. Now that the Soviet Union has become so powerful, the Chinese people's revolution has achieved such great victories, construction in the various people's democracies has achieved such great success, the movement of the peoples of various countries throughout the world against oppression and aggression has risen to such heights, and our front of friendship and solidarity is so consolidated, we can say with complete certainty that we are not afraid of any imperialist aggression. Any imperialist aggression will be smashed by us, and all their despicable provocations will be to no avail.

"The reason that the great friendship between the peoples of the two countries, China and the Soviet Union, is unbreakable is that our friendship has been built on the great principles of the internationalism of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. The friendship between the peoples of the various people's democracies, as well as with all the people who love peace, democracy, and justice in all the countries of the world is also built upon these great principles of internationalism and consequently is also unbreakable.

"Clearly, the strength created by this kind of friendship of ours is inexhaustible and truly invincible.

"Let all imperialist aggressors and warmongers tremble before our great friendship!

"Long live the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin!

"Immortal glory to the heroic name of the great Stalin!"

—"The Greatest Friendship" (March 9, 1953), WMZ1, pp. 329-32, in full.

"[Stalin's] merits outweigh his faults; [we must] make a concrete analysis [of Stalin's case], and overall assessment [taking all aspects into account]." —Comment on Stalin made to Mikoyan around April 6, 1956, about two months after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in which Khrushchev denounced Stalin. WMZ2, p. 41, in full.

[The authors of UP writing, and referring to a secret "Additional Agreement" to the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance of February 1950, in which Stalin forced China to agree not to allow the citizens of third countries to settle or to carry out any industrial, financial, trade, or other related activities in Manchuria and Xinjiang:] "The agreement reminded

the Chinese of the unequal treaties of the past... But we have since learned that as early as April 1956, Mao told Mikoyan the secret deals on Xinjiang and Manchuria were ‘two bitter pills’ that Stalin forced him to swallow, and the next year he complained to Gromyko that ‘only imperialists’ would think of imposing such a deal on China. Indeed, in his contempt for the agreement, Mao came close to giving the game away in [March] 1958, when he spoke of ‘two “colonies” [in China], the Northeast and Xinjiang, where the people of third countries were not permitted to settle down.’”

—UP, p. 122.

“The problem of transmitting [communications]. There are certain things that can be talked about everywhere. The bad things about Stalin and the Third International can be transmitted to the [special] district [Party] committee secretaries as well as to the xian [Party] committee secretaries. These [bad things] were not written into the article out of consideration for the situation as a whole. (In this article there was but one line written: Some bad suggestions were made), and we are not prepared to discuss them in newspapers or among the masses.”

—Talk at Enlarged Meeting of the Political Bureau (April 1956), WMZ2, pp. 71-72. An editorial footnote says that by “bad things” Mao is referring to the criticisms made of Stalin by Khrushchev in his “secret” speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956. The “article” referred to here is apparently “On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” which appeared in the People’s Daily on April 5, 1956. The word xian means something like “county” or “district”.

“When we talk about committing errors we mean committing errors in subjective [perception] and mistakes in thinking. The many articles that we have seen criticizing Stalin’s errors either don’t mention this issue at all, or mention this issue only very infrequently. Why did Stalin commit errors? It’s because on some questions his subjective [perception] did not correspond to objective reality. At present, things like this still [occur] frequently in our work. To be subjective is to proceed not from objective reality or from realistic possibility but rather from subjective desires....”

—“Reinforce the Unity of the Party and Carry Forward the Party Traditions” (Aug. 30, 1956), a speech at a preparatory meeting for the Eighth National Congress of the CPC. WMZ2, p. 112.

“The first thing is to unite with the several dozen Communist parties and with the Soviet Union. Since some mistakes have occurred in the Soviet Union and those things have been much talked about, they have been exaggerated, and now there is the impression that mistakes of that kind are really terrible. There is something wrong with such an outlook. It is impossible for any nation not to commit any mistakes at all, and [since] the Soviet Union was the first socialist country in the world, and has had such a long experience, it is impossible for it not to have made some mistakes. Where are the mistakes of the Soviet Union, such as Stalin’s mistakes, located [in the scheme of things]? They are partial and temporary. Although we hear that some [of these] things have been around for twenty years already, they are nevertheless still temporary and partial and can be corrected. The main current in the Soviet Union, its principal aspect, the majority [of its people], was correct. Russia gave birth to Leninism, and after the October Revolution, it became

the first socialist country. It built socialism, defeated fascism, and became a great industrial state. It has many things from which we can learn. Of course, we should study the advanced experiences, and not the backward experiences. We have always proposed the slogan of studying the advanced experience of the Soviet Union. Who asked you to learn the backward experiences? Some people say that no matter what, even the farts of the Russians smell good; that too is subjectivism. Even the Russians themselves would admit that they stink! Therefore, things must be analyzed. We've said before that with regard to Stalin, we should [see him as having been] three parts [bad] and seven parts [good]."

—Ibid., pp. 113-4. An editor's note states that this is probably the first public statement of the "three parts bad, seven parts good" summation of Stalin that Mao repeated subsequently on a number of occasions (see below).

"Stalin should be criticized, but we have differing opinions as to the form the criticism ought to take. There are some other questions, too, on which we disagree."

—Remarks about the Criticism of Stalin (Oct. 23, 1956), WMZ2, p. 148, in full. A comment made to P. F. Yudin, the Soviet ambassador to China.

"I'd like to say something about the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As I see it, there are two 'knives': one is Lenin and the other is Stalin. The Russians have now relinquished the knife represented by Stalin. Gomulka and some people in Hungary have picked up this knife to kill the Soviet Union, [by] opposing the so-called Stalinism. The Communist parties of many European countries are also criticizing the Soviet Union; the leader [of these parties] is Togliatti. The imperialists are also using this knife to kill people; Dulles, for one, picked it up and played around with it for some time. This knife was not loaned out; it was thrown out. We, the Chinese, did not discard it. Our first [principle] is to defend Stalin; the second is also to criticize Stalin's mistakes; [so] we wrote the essay 'On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.'

"We are unlike some people who smeared and destroyed Stalin. Rather, we have acted in accordance with the actual situation.

"Are parts of the knife represented by Lenin now also being discarded by people in the Soviet leadership? As I see it, much of it has already been discarded. Is [the experience of] the October Revolution still valid? Can it remain a model for all other countries? Khrushchev's report at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU stated that it is possible to achieve political power through parliamentary means. This is to say that other countries no longer need to emulate the October Revolution. Once this door is opened, Leninism will basically be abandoned....

"How much capital do you have? All you have is a Lenin and a Stalin. But you have discarded Stalin, and most of Lenin too. Lenin's legs are gone, perhaps there's still a head left, or perhaps one of Lenin's two hands has been chopped off. We study Marxism-Leninism, and we learn from the October Revolution. Marx has written so much, and Lenin has also written so much! Relying on the masses and taking the mass line are things we learned from them. It is very

dangerous not to rely on the masses in waging class struggle and not to distinguish between the enemy and ourselves.”

—Speech at the Second Plenum of the Eight Central Committee (Nov. 15, 1956), Version I, WMZ2, pp. 166-7. This version of the speech, however, had many strong criticisms of Stalin removed from it. (See the next item below.)

“From the very beginning our Party has emulated the Soviet Union. The mass line, our political work, and [the theory of] the dictatorship of the proletariat have all been learned from the October Revolution. At that time, Lenin had focused on the mobilization of the masses, and on organizing the worker-peasant-soldier soviet, and so on. He did not rely on [doing things by] administrative decree. Rather, Lenin sent Party representatives to carry out political work. The problem lies with the latter phase of Stalin’s leadership [which came] after the October Revolution. Although [Stalin] was still promoting socialism and communism, he nonetheless abandoned some of Lenin’s things, deviated from the orbit of Leninism, and became alienated from the masses, and so on. Therefore, we did suffer some disadvantages when we emulated the things of the later stages of Stalin’s leadership and transplanted them for application in China in a doctrinaire way. Today, the Soviet Union still has some advanced experiences that deserve to be emulated, but there are some other [aspects] in which we simply cannot be like the Soviet Union. For example, the socialist transformation of the capitalist industries and commerce, the cooperativization of agriculture, and the Ten Major Relationships in economic construction; these are all ways of doing things in China. From now on, in our socialist economic construction, we should primarily start with China’s circumstances, and with the special characteristics of the circumstances and the times in which we are situated. Therefore, we must still propose the slogan of learning from the Soviet Union; just that we cannot forcibly and crudely transplant and employ things blindly and in a doctrinaire fashion. Similarly, we can also learn some of the things that are good in bourgeois countries; this is because every country must have its strengths and weaknesses, and we intend chiefly to learn other people’s strengths.

“Stalin had a tendency to deviate from Marxism-Leninism. A concrete expression of this is [his] negation of contradictions, and to date, [the Soviet Union] has not yet thoroughly eliminated the influence of this viewpoint of Stalin’s. Stalin spoke [the language of] materialism and the dialectical method, but in reality he was subjectivist. He placed the individual above everything else, negated the group, and negated the masses. [He engaged in] the worship of the individual; in fact, to be more precise, [in] personal dictatorships. This is antimaterialism. Stalin also spoke of the dialectical method, but in reality [he] was metaphysical. For example, in the [Short] History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), he wrote of the dialectical method, [but] put [the theory of] contradictions [only] at the very end. We should say that the most fundamental problem of dialectics is the unity of contradictory opposites. It is [precisely] because of his metaphysical [character] that a one-sided viewpoint was produced, in which the internal connections in a thing are repudiated, and problems are looked at isolatedly and in a static way. To pay heed to dialectics would be to look at problems and treat a problem as a unity of opposites, and that is why it would be [a] comprehensive [methodology]. Life and death, war and peace, are opposites of a contradiction. In reality, they also have an internal connection between them. That is why at times these oppositions are also united. When we [seek to] understand problems we cannot see only one side. We should analyze [it] from all sides, look

through its essence. In this way, with regard to [understanding] a person, we would not be [taking the position] at one time that he is all good, and then at another time that he is all bad, without a single good point. Why is our Party correct? It is because we have been able to proceed from the objective conditions in understanding and resolving all problems; in this way we are more comprehensive and we can avoid being absolutists.

“Secondly, the mass line was seen as tailism by Stalin. [He] did not recognize the good points about the mass line, and he used administrative methods to resolve many problems. But we Communists are materialists; we acknowledge that it is the masses who create everything and are the masters of history. [For us] there are no individual heroes; only when the masses are united can there be strength. In fact, since Lenin died, the mass line has been forgotten in the Soviet Union. [Even] at the time of opposing Stalin, [the Soviet Union’s leadership] still did not properly acknowledge or emphasize the significance of the mass line. Of course, more recently, attention has begun to be paid to this, but the understanding is still not [sufficiently] deep.

“Furthermore, class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat were [items] that Lenin had emphasized. At one time, the divergence between Lenin and the Third International and the Second International was mainly along the lines that the Marxists emphasized the class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat whereas the opportunists were unwilling to acknowledge them. One of the lessons to be learned from the occurrence of the Polish and Hungarian Incidents, in addition to [the fact that] there were shortcomings in the work [of the Communist parties], is that after the victory of the revolution they had not properly mobilized the masses to weed out thoroughly the counterrevolutionary elements.”

—Speech at the Second Plenum of the Eight Central Committee (Nov. 15, 1956), Version II, WMZ2, pp. 185-6. One excessively long paragraph in the report of this speech has been broken up into three paragraphs for readability purposes. Note that an expurgated version of this speech, which drastically tones down the criticisms of Stalin, is given as “version I” in WMZ2, and was also published in slightly different form after Mao’s death in the Selected Works of Mao Tsetung, vol. V. (An excerpt from “version I” is presented above, just before this item.)

“The fundamental policy and line during the period of Stalin’s administration were correct; methods employed against the enemy mustn’t be used against our own comrade.”

—Comment on the Criticism of Stalin (Nov. 30, 1956), WMZ2, p. 196. A remark made to the Soviet ambassador.

“Last year several great storms raged in the international sphere. The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union kicked up a row against Stalin. Following that, the imperialists cooked up two major anti-Communist storms, and in the international Communist movement also there were two big storms of debate. Some of the [Communist] parties in Europe and America felt the impact of these upheavals and suffered considerable damage, but the damage sustained and the degree to which the [Communist] parties in the countries in the East were affected was relatively small. With the convocation of the ‘Twentieth Congress’ of the CPSU, some people who had supported Stalin enthusiastically in the past have now become very vigorous in their opposition [to him]. I don’t think these people are practicing Marxism-

Leninism; they do not analyze problems, and they are also lacking in revolutionary ethics. Marxism-Leninism also includes [the code of] revolutionary ethics of the proletariat. You supported [Stalin] so very enthusiastically in the past; before making such a big switch now, you must at least give some reason [for doing so]. [Instead,] you offered no reason at all, but made such a sudden 180-degree turn and acted as if you had never supported Stalin, although actually you supported him very strongly in the past. The Stalin problem involves the entire international Communist movement, and the parties in all countries have become involved.

“With regard to the ‘Twentieth Congress’ of the CPSU, the overwhelming majority of the cadres in our Party are dissatisfied with it, believing that it was too harsh in its treatment of Stalin. This is a normal feeling and a normal reaction. Among a minority, however, there is stirring. Whenever a typhoon approaches, the ants will leave their holes before the rain comes. They have very sharp ‘noses,’ and they understand meteorology. When the typhoon of the CPSU’s Twentieth Congress approached, in China too, some ants left their holes. These are the vacillating elements in the Party; they vacillate whenever they get the chance. When they heard that Stalin was knocked off with a single blow, they felt very comfortable about it and swung over to the [other] side, shouting ‘Long live [Khrushchev]!’ and saying that everything about Khrushchev was good and that they’d always held that view. Later, when the imperialists hit back with a few blows, and a few blows were delivered from within the international Communist movement itself, even Khrushchev had to change his tune, and they again swung back over to this side. Compelled by the general trend, they had no choice but to swing back. [It’s like] a tuft of grass on a wall; when the wind blows it sways to one side and then the other. To swing back was not their true intention; their true intention was to swing over to the other side. Those people within the Party and outside it who gloated about the Polish affair and the Hungarian affair made a good show of it! They talked about Poznan one moment and about Hungary the next. In this way they exposed themselves; the ants left their holes, and even the turtles have come out. They followed Gomulka’s baton. When Gomulka said [he wanted] big democracy, they too said that ‘they wanted] big democracy. The situation has changed now, and they do not utter a sound. Silence [,however,] is not their true intention; their true intention is to make a lot of noise.

“Whenever a typhoon blows, the vacillating elements who cannot stand up to it will sway back and forth; this is a law. I advise everybody to pay attention to this problem....”

—Speech at a Conference of Provincial, Municipal, and Autonomous Region Party Secretaries (Jan. 18, 1957), version I, WMZ2, pp. 230-1. (Version I is also available in SW vol. 5.) See below for the same passage from version II.

“After the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the great majority of the people in our Party [remained] normal and secure, [but] there was a tremor among a small number of people. Before it rains, there are bound to be ants leaving their holes. In China, too, a small number of ants wanted to leave their holes to engage in some activity. Now Khrushchev has changed, and the ants have withdrawn, gone back [into the holes]. After the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, two big storms came up. The [Communist] parties in many countries suffered damage: The British Party lost one-fourth [of its membership], the Swiss [Party] half; and the United States made chaos throughout the world. The Eastern parties and the Party in China were not quite so severely affected. The problem of

Stalin has involved the entire Communist movement. Some people criticize Stalin without making any analysis. The people who were most staunchly supportive of Stalin in the past are precisely the most vehemently opposed to Stalin now. They have suddenly turned around 180 degrees; they no longer talk of Marxism-Leninism, or of ethics. In the Party, some people begin to teeter as soon as there is any rustling in the wind. Some sway once or twice and then stop swaying; some will go on swaying forever. Saplings, the stalks of rice, barley, corn, and the grass on the wall always sway when they see the wind coming; only the big tree will not sway. There are typhoons every year, but there is not necessarily a political typhoon every year. This phenomenon is a natural phenomenon in society and politics.

“The Chinese Party is a proletarian [and] semiproletarian party, but many members come from rich peasant, landlord, and capitalist family backgrounds. Some Party members, even though they have struggled hard and arduously for many years, have not learned Marxism-Leninism well, and cannot endure typhoons ideologically and politically; they ought to pay attention. Some people in the Party have passed every gate except this gate of socialism....”

—Speech at a Conference of Provincial, Municipal, and Autonomous Region Party Secretaries (Jan. 18, 1957), version II, WMZ2, pp. 240-1. See previous item for the same passage from version I.

“My advice to the comrades here today is that if you [already] understand materialism and dialectics, then you still need to supplement it by learning a bit about their opposites, idealism and metaphysics. Those things on the opposing side, Kant’s and Hegel’s writings, Confucius, and Chiang Kai-shek’s books, ought to be read. If you don’t understand idealism and metaphysics and have not undergone a struggle against these things of the opposing side, your materialism and dialectics would not be solid. The shortcoming of some of our Communist Party members and Communist intellectuals is precisely that they know too little about the things on the opposite side. They read a few books written by Marx and proceed to talk about them accordingly; this is relatively monotonous. Their speeches and writings [therefore] lack persuasiveness. If you don’t study things on the opposite side you cannot refute them. Marx, Engels, and Lenin were not like that. They all studied energetically and learned all sorts of contemporary and historical things; moreover, they counseled others to do the same. The three component parts of Marxism were produced through the process of studying the things in bourgeois [society], studying German classical philosophy, British classical economics, and French utopian socialism, and struggling against them. Stalin was a bit less sound. For instance during his time German classical idealist philosophy was said to be a kind of reaction on the part of the German aristocracy to the French Revolution. To draw a conclusion like that is to totally negate German classical idealist philosophy. He [also] negated German military science, saying that [since] the Germans had been defeated, their military science was impractical, and Clausewitz’s book needn’t be read any more.

“Stalin had a lot of metaphysical [ideas], and he taught many people to engage in metaphysics. In the Short Course on the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), he said that Marxist dialectics had four basic characteristics. The first that he talked about was the relationship between things, as if all things were related for no reason. In fact, how are things related? The relationship is actually between the two aspects of a contradiction. In everything

there are two aspects in opposition to each other. The fourth [characteristic] he talked about was the internal contradiction in things. Again, he only talked about the struggle between opposites, but not about the unity of opposites. According to this unity of opposites—this basic law of dialectics—opposites struggle against each other, and at the same time they are united; they are mutually exclusive and also interrelated, and under certain conditions they transform themselves into each other.

“The entry on ‘identity’ in the fourth edition of the Concise Dictionary of Philosophy compiled in the Soviet Union reflects Stalin’s point of view. The dictionary says, ‘Phenomena such as war and peace, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and life and death have no identity because they are fundamentally opposed to and mutually exclusive of each other.’ This is to say that these phenomena which are in fundamental opposition to each other do not have identity in the Marxist [sense], are mutually exclusive rather than interrelated, and cannot transform themselves into each other under certain [necessary] conditions. This interpretation is fundamentally incorrect.”

[Mao then elaborates on this point in several more paragraphs. —Ed.]

“Stalin was unable to make the connection between the struggle and unity of opposites. The thought of some people in the Soviet Union is just metaphysical and petrified like that; they view things in either this way or that way [arbitrarily] and do not acknowledge the unity of opposites. Therefore, they make mistakes in politics. We uphold the viewpoint of the unity of opposites and adopt the policy of letting a hundred flowers bloom and letting a hundred schools contend. At the same time that fragrant flowers are blooming, there will inevitably be poisonous weeds blooming too. This is nothing to fear, and, under certain conditions, it may even be beneficial.”

—Speech at the Conference of Provincial, Municipal, and Autonomous Region Party Secretaries (Jan. 27, 1957), version I, WMZ2, pp. 253-5.

“In our Party, there are also all sorts of opinions that are in opposition to each other. For instance, there are two opposing views regarding the CPSU’s knocking off Stalin in one blow at the ‘Twentieth Congress’; one supports [the CPSU’s action] and the other opposes it. Differences of opinion in the Party are a common occurrence. If opinions happen to coincide, after a month or two, new and differing opinions will again emerge.”

—Ibid., p. 257.

“The fundamental reason for being afraid of trouble and for handling these matters in a simple way lies in not recognizing ideologically that socialist society is a unity of opposites and that there are contradictions, classes, and class struggle within it.

“For a long time Stalin refused to recognize that under the socialist system contradictions between the relations of production and the forces of production and contradictions between the superstructure and the economic base [continue to exist]. It was only when he wrote Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR one year before his death that he hesitantly discussed the contradictions between the relations of production and the forces of production under the



socialist system and said that if policies were incorrect or improperly regulated, problems would arise. Even so, he still did not present [the problem of] contradictions under a socialist system between the relations and the forces of production and between the superstructure and the economic base as an issue of overall significance, he still did not recognize that these contradictions are the basic contradictions that propel socialist society forward. He thought that his state was secure. We mustn't think that the state is secure; it is secure and, at the same time, insecure.

"...Since the Second World War, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the parties in some countries in East Europe have no longer concerned themselves with the fundamental principles of Marxism. They are no longer concerned about class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Party, democratic centralism, and the connection between the Party and the masses. The [political] atmosphere is thinning out. Consequently, the Hungarian affair has occurred. We must firmly uphold the fundamental theories of Marxism. Every province, municipality, and autonomous region must promote theoretical work and cultivate Marxist theoreticians and critics in a planned way."

—Ibid., pp. 261-2.

"Letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend is still correct. Truth emerges out of struggle with error. Beauty emerges out of comparison with and struggle with ugliness. Good deeds and good people emerge out of comparison with and struggle with evil deeds and evil people. Fragrant flowers emerge from the comparison with and struggle with poisonous weeds. Materialism emerges out of the comparison with and struggle with idealism. Many people hate Chiang Kai-shek, but they don't know what a bastard Chiang Kai-shek really is. Therefore we should publish the collected works of Chiang Kai-shek. We should also publish the collected works of Sun Yat-sen and the collected works of Kang Youwei. To prohibit people from coming into contact with ugliness, error and fallacies, idealism, and metaphysics is a very dangerous policy. It would cause people's thinking to deteriorate and ossify; it would make them one-sided and incapable of facing the world or meeting the challenge of a rival show. We Communists know too little about the opposite side, so we are comparatively monotonous and can hardly produce any persuasive statements. Neither Marx, nor Engels, nor Lenin was like this. They all strenuously studied contemporary and historical matters and also instructed other people to study in a like manner. Stalin was a bit inferior. He rejected German philosophy (Kant and Feuerbach), and because Germany was defeated in war he also rejected German military teachings. Germany's classical philosophy is the forefather of Marxism. Stalin was in reality metaphysical [in his ideas], and he did not recognize the unity of opposites. In the Dictionary of Philosophy they employed a metaphysical way of putting things. [In it,] war does not turn into peace, nor does peace turn into war; the two things are separate and unrelated; they are not mutually transmutable; they only struggle [with each other], but there is no unity. Lenin said that war was an extension of politics and a special means, and that peace was a result of war. [He said that] politics was struggle during the time of peace, and that it is during times of war that peace is fomented. Stalin misled many people. These people had a lot of metaphysics in their minds and became rigid in their thinking, thus they committed political mistakes. When others disagreed [with them] occasionally, they were ostracized. [When one was deemed a] counterrevolutionary, the only [fate one could meet was that of] death by execution, and whoever disagreed with the

Soviet Union was called anti-Soviet. But in real life Stalin could not do all things in this way. Stalin didn't execute or jail everybody. In 1936 and 1937 he killed many people. In 1938 he killed fewer, and in 1939 he killed even fewer. It is not possible to execute everyone who disagrees. We, for one, had disagreements with Stalin. We wanted to sign a Sino-Soviet Treaty, but he didn't want to sign; we wanted the Chinese-Changchun Railway back, but he didn't want to give it up. Even so, it is still possible to snatch the meat out of a tiger's mouth."

—Speech at the Conference of Provincial, Municipal, and Autonomous Region Party Secretaries (Jan. 27, 1957), version II, WMZ2, pp. 279-280.

"Fifth, the development of agriculture is the primary source of accumulation for the state. Therefore we must persuade cadres to go to the rural areas; if we want to industrialize, then we must engage in agriculture. A ratio of accumulation must be worked out. Stalin emphasized accumulation too much, which had a [negative] impact on industry. What ratio is actually desirable still needs to be studied. In short, we must make the cooperatives expand reproduction so that we can be assured of even greater accumulation. We must not drain the pond to catch the fish."

—Ibid., p. 284.

"Materialism and idealism are a unity of opposites, and dialectics and metaphysics are also a unity of opposites. With philosophy there is always struggle; to discuss philosophy you have to struggle. Some people, when they discuss philosophy, only talk about one side [of the issue]; [when they talk about] letting a hundred flowers bloom, they only talk about letting fragrant flowers bloom, and not about getting rid of poisonous weeds. We acknowledge that opposites exist in socialism. Stalin had his metaphysics, and his subjectivism. The Soviet Union does not acknowledge the existence of opposites [within socialism], and forbids [their existence] by law; as a matter of fact, many wrong things are hidden behind the front of socialism. Lenin believed that merely talking about materialism could not solve problems. To solve problems, one must struggle with idealism. To struggle with it, one must study idealism. The three component parts of Marxism are the result of struggle after having studied capitalist things."

—Interjections at a Conference of Provincial and Municipal Party Secretaries (Jan. 1957), WMZ2, p. 292.

"Dogmatism has no force. One of the reasons why it has developed is because the Communist party has come into power. Marx and Engels criticized Dühring, and Lenin criticized Lunacharsky. They had to exert great efforts to outargue them. Stalin was different (he was in power). So his criticism was not balanced and was very similar to a father scolding his son. [It's like the saying:] 'As soon as he has power in his hands, he rules by fiat.' Criticism should not rely on state power; it should use truth. If you use Marxism, if you apply effort, you can prevail.

"You can't use dogmatism to criticize others, because it has no power. See how Lenin wrote his empirio-criticism. Later on Stalin was different. He didn't discuss problems [with others] on an equal footing. He didn't air his opinions only after collecting large quantities of materials. Some

of the things he wrote were good, others he wrote as if he were sitting on a hillock and picking up stones to hit people. One is uncomfortable after reading [such writings]....

“Dogmatist articles are dull, oversimplified, and unconvincing.

“Dogmatism has developed because [we] have come into power.

“Marx and Engels put a lot of thought into refuting Dühring. But Stalin in power was different. He cursed people, was inequitable, so he couldn’t be convincing.

“We should study articles that analyze other people.

“Once in power, to curse people like dressing down a son is no good.

“The relationship between the people and the party in power shouldn’t be one between the people and their master. We shouldn’t curse.

“Dogmatism is not Marxism.”

—Talk at Yinian Tang (Feb. 16, 1957), SSCM, pp. 119-20.

“Stalin had his Idealism and his materialism; he had a one-sided character.

“Metaphysics has Idealism as well as materialism. Stalin had both. He had dialectics as well as metaphysics. Precisely for this reason he had both merits and demerits; his merits surpass his demerits.

“Soviet comrades find it difficult to change; they like to use high-handed methods.”

—Ibid., p. 123.

Stalin is fundamentally a materialist. He also has some [sense of] dialectics, but not quite that much of dialectics.”

— Conversations with Scientists and Writers on Contradiction among the People (Feb. 16, 1957), WMZ2, p. 304. (This is probably an alternate translation of the previous item.)

“Lenin said contradictions among the people exist, but Lenin did not have time enough to analyze this question fully. As for antagonism, is it possible for contradictions among the people to be transformed from non-antagonistic contradictions into antagonistic ones? It must be said that it is possible; but in Lenin’s time this had not yet happened, and perhaps he did not watch this problem carefully since he had such a short time [as leader of the Soviet Union]. After the October Revolution, during the period when Stalin was in charge, for a long time he confused these two types of contradictions. Problems like bad mouthing the government, talking about the government, being dissatisfied with the government, being dissatisfied with the Communist party, criticizing the government, criticizing the Communist party, are in origin problems among

the people. But there are two types of criticism: There is the enemy criticizing us, the enemy being dissatisfied with the Communist party; and there are the people criticizing us, the people being dissatisfied with us; and the two must be distinguished. Stalin for so many years did not make such distinctions, or rarely did. A few [comrades] who have worked in the Soviet Union for many years have told me there were no distinctions; you could only talk about good things, not bad; you could only sing praises, not make criticisms; whoever made a criticism was suspect of being an enemy and ran the risk of imprisonment or execution.”

—“On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (Speaking Notes), (Feb. 27, 1957), SSCM, pp. 136-7.

“You could only speak favorably, and not unfavorably; you could only sing praises to his successes and virtues, but were not allowed to criticize; if you expressed any criticisms he suspected you of being an enemy, and you were in danger of being sent to a camp or executed...”

“‘Leftists’ are left opportunists. The so-called ‘leftists’ raise the banner of the ‘left’ but they are not really left, for they exaggerate the contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. Stalin, for example, was such a person...”

—“On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (Speaking Notes), (Feb. 27, 1957). Quoted in TMT, p. 122. Alternate translation below.

“‘Left’-ists, ‘left’ opportunists. So-called ‘leftists’ are ‘left’ in quotation marks, not the true left. These people excessively emphasize antagonistic contradictions between the enemy and ourselves. For example, Stalin was this kind of person; we, too, have such people who stress [them] to excess, mistaking the second type of contradiction, contradictions originally among the people, for the first type, mistaking them as [contradictions] between the enemy and ourselves....

“...The policy previously employed was the one brought back from the Western Paradise. That ‘Western Paradise’ was Stalin and [the policy] was called ‘ruthless struggle and merciless blows.’ Seeing that this was not suitable, when we later criticized dogmatism, we discontinued using the method of ‘dealing with a man as he deals with you’ [i.e., ‘an eye for an eye’]. [We] chose another method, another policy, which is to unite with them, to proceed from the desire for unity, to go through criticism or struggle, to achieve unity based on a new foundation. This policy was apparently [sic] raised in the 1942 Rectification [Movement].”

—“On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (Speaking Notes), (Feb. 27, 1957), SSCM, pp. 138-9. Alternate translation above. Mao is speaking here of intra-party struggle.

“How has the work of eliminating counter-revolutionaries been carried out after all in our country? Very badly, or very well? In my opinion, there have been shortcomings, but if we compare ourselves with other countries, we have done relatively well. We have done better than the Soviet Union, and better than Hungary. The Soviet Union has been too leftist, and Hungary too rightist....

“He [Stalin] didn’t deal with this matter well at all. He had two aspects. On the one hand, he eliminated genuine counter-revolutionaries; this aspect was correct. On the other hand, he wrongly killed a large number of people, important people, such as delegates to the Party Congress....

“Contradictions among the people, and how to resolve this problem, is a new problem. Historically, Marx and Engels said very little about this problem, and though Lenin referred to it, he only just referred to it. He said that in a socialist society antagonisms died away, but contradictions continued to exist; in other words ... the bourgeoisie had been overthrown, but there continued to be contradictions among the people. [Thus] Lenin said there were still contradictions among the people, [but] he didn’t have time to analyze this problem systematically. As for antagonism, can contradictions among the people be transformed from non-antagonistic to antagonistic contradictions? It must be said that they can, but in Lenin’s day there was as yet no possibility of investigating this problem in detail. There was so little time allotted to him. Of course, after the October Revolution, during the period when Stalin was in charge, for a long time he mixed up these two types of contradictions.”

—“On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (Speaking Notes), (Feb. 27, 1957). Quoted in TMT, p. 151-2. Alternative version below.

“The problem of eliminating counterrevolutionaries is a problem of the first type of contradiction [i.e., between the enemy and ourselves]. Speaking comparatively, in the last analysis how has our country handled the work of eliminating counterrevolutionaries? Poorly or well? In my view there have been shortcomings, but in comparison with other countries we have done relatively well. Better than the Soviet Union, better than Hungary. The Soviet Union was too leftist, Hungary was too rightist. We have drawn a lesson from this; it’s not that we’re especially clever. Because the Soviet Union has been too left, we have learned something from that experience. We ourselves have committed leftist excesses, too. During the period of the southern base areas, when we were still rather ignorant, we suffered losses and every base area without exception used the same Soviet method. Later [we] put things right, and only then did we gain experience. In Yan’an [we] finally enacted some rules. Not a single person was to be killed and the bulk [of offenders] were not to be arrested. Once in Beijing [i.e., after the 1949 Communist victory] there were some improvements, though naturally there are still shortcomings, errors. Still, by now progress has been made. Compared with the Soviet Union, it is two lines [i.e., two different lines on this were followed. –Ed.] (this refers to the past, not the present, namely the time when Stalin was in power; he did things badly). There were two sides to him. One side was the elimination of true counterrevolutionaries; that was the correct side. The other side was the incorrect killing of numerous people, important people. For example, a high percentage of delegates to the Communist Party [National] Congress were killed. How many in the Central Committee did he kill? He sized and killed 80 percent of the Seventeenth Party Congress delegates, and he seized and killed 50 percent of the Central Committee members elected at the Seventeenth Congress [in 1934].”

—“On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (Speaking Notes), (Feb. 27, 1957), SSCM, pp. 141-2, and footnote 11. An alternate translation of some of this passage is given above.

“[We] should affirm that contradictions in socialist society exist; these are basic kinds of contradictions, namely, contradictions between the relations of production and the forces of production, [and] contradictions between the superstructure and the economic base. These contradictions all appear as contradictions among the people. Because at this time socialist society does not have exploiters, the system of ownership is that of the whole people or collective [ownership]; there are no private capitalists, no private landowners, no private factory owners [or] enterprise owners. Therefore Stalin, we say that Stalin was somewhat deficient in dialectics, but [not that he] was without dialectics. In the People’s Daily editorial we said he partially but seriously turned [his] back on dialectical materialism. That’s what [we] said. Under his influence a book was written, called *A Concise Dictionary of Philosophy*, written by two men. Of the two, one is the Soviet Ambassador [Pavel] Yudin. It [was written] under Stalin’s influence, [and] in the context of discussing identity—he had a topic called identity on which he rambled on and on—he refuted formal logical identity, [but] failed completely to analyze clearly whether formal logical identity and dialectical identity are the same thing or not. Then [he] quoted Engels to say, Engels said there is no such identity, in reality everything exists in change, in objective reality there is no such identity. Then he brought up some metaphysics; he says things in opposition, mutually repellent opposites, cannot be said to have identity. For example, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, these two classes in a single society, they have no identity, have only mutual rejection, have only struggle. War and peace have no identity; life and death have no identity. To say these things have identity is a mistaken concept [he said]. After Stalin died, Soviet philosophers, the Soviet Union began to change on this question. I haven’t read much, but I can see they have changed. In philosophy Stalin had a rather metaphysical outlook. The so-called metaphysical outlook [means that things] have no change, war is war, the bourgeoisie is the bourgeoisie, the proletariat is the proletariat. Our theory is different: The bourgeoisie becomes the proletariat; the oppressed proletariat transform into the proletariat which rules the nation. War turns into peace, peace turns into war, life turns into death, death turns into life. In the midst of identity, after quoting what Engels said (what Engels said had no metaphysics), he [Stalin, or Yudin, et al., representing Stalin] brought up a piece of metaphysics, these two things short of change cannot have unity, cannot be transformable, but [elsewhere] Stalin in his book on economics said socialism has contradictions, between productive forces and productive relations, [and] moreover [that] if [the two] are not handled well, they can become antagonistic. This is well said; nonetheless it is not thorough. I say his dialectics are bashful dialectics, are coy dialectics, or could be called hesitant dialectics. As we look at this question now, we should recognize socialism contains contradictions; the basic contradiction is the contradiction between relations of production and productive forces. The ideologies of the superstructure (politics, law, religion, philosophy, these various ideologies) should serve the economic base; [they] should match the economic base. If [they] do not match [it], then contradictions emerge.”

—Ibid., SSCM, pp. 163-164. (This seems to be from the verbatim report of Mao’s speech, which explains its somewhat rough nature at times.)

“Can senior cadres be criticized? [On] this problem of criticism, from Marx onward, never once has it been said that junior and senior cadres should be distinguished, [or] said that only junior cadres can be criticized [and] senior cadres cannot be criticized.... If while you are living you receive no criticism, after you are dead, people will still criticize you. We have criticized the

dead, [we have] criticized Confucius: Down with the house of Confucius! Even a man who has been dead for several thousand years, [we] still criticize! Now Confucius is a bit better. Stalin was also criticized after his death! Living people can be criticized [and] dead people can also be criticized.... After committing an error, one should always be criticized.”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 171.

“Stalin was 70 percent a Marxist, 30 percent not a Marxist. [He] was 30 percent bourgeois, 70 percent Marxist.”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 173.

“How [should we] look on the criticism of Stalin? We [humans] are also commodities of dual character. [This is an allusion to Marx’s comments about how commodities have the dual characteristics of use value and exchange value. —Ed.] The criticism of Stalin has a two-sided nature. One side has real benefit; one side is not good. To expose the cult of Stalin, to tear off the lid, to liberate people, this is a liberation movement; but his [i.e., Khrushchev’s] method of exposing [Stalin] is incorrect; [he] hasn’t made a good analysis, clubbing [him] to death with a single blow. On the one hand, this provoked the worldwide currents of the latter half of last year; on the other hand, it later also provoked the Hungarian and Polish incidents. But he [Stalin] had his incorrect side; although our published articles have not pointed at the [CPSU] Twentieth Congress, in fact [we’ve] talked about it. What have we discussed with the Soviet comrades face to face? About how the Stalin problem has not been handled appropriately; [we] discussed our great-nation chauvinism....”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 178.

“Without the demise of the Third International, the Chinese revolution could not have succeeded. When Lenin was alive, the Third International was well led. After Lenin’s death, the leaders of the Third International were dogmatic leaders (for instance, leaders [like] Stalin, Bukharin were not that good). Only the period under Dimitrov was well led. Dimitrov’s reports were well reasoned. Of course, the Third International had [its] merits as well, for instance, helping various countries to establish a [communist] party. Later on, [however] the dogmatists paid no attention to the special features of various countries [and] blindly transplanted everything from Russia. China [for one] suffered great losses.”

—Summary of a Talk with the Representatives of Press and Publishing Circles, (March 10, 1957), SSCM, p. 255.

“We have some people [Communist Party members —Ed.] in the area of literature and art, but even there it is a thirty-seventy split. That is like Stalin’s committing errors; [didn’t we say that] Stalin was 30 per cent wrong and 70 per cent correct? We have [in the CP —Ed.] 30 per cent know-how, and 70 per cent ignorance. [Even] in the area of literature and art, the advantage lies outside the Communist Party.”

--Speech at Tianjin Municipal Party Members and Cadres Meeting (March 17, 1957), WMZ2, p. 395. For another translation, see SSCM, p. 279.

“To affirm everything we did, without analyzing it—this thing is wrong. The dogmatists of the past were just like that. Rákosi was like that, and so was Stalin. Can you say Stalin was entirely dogmatist? No, you can’t say that. This man, he did a lot of things, but he did have [some] dogmatism. This dogmatism of his influenced China, making us fail in our revolution during a certain period. If we were to do things as he bade us, we would not have been able to carry out the revolution in the later stage, and we wouldn’t be holding a meeting here. Who built the building? Not us. We wouldn’t have had the opportunity [to hold this meeting] because it would still be the government of the Kuomintang [and the] imperialists [running things in China]. Stalin had [things on] both sides; he also had [some] dogmatism—[wanting us to] transplant the [experience of the] Soviet Union in everything. We must learn from the Soviet Union. The things of the Soviet Union, both the mistakes and the achievements, are very worthy of being learned from. The slogan that we propose now is to learn from the Soviet Union’s advanced experiences. We didn’t say that we should learn from their backward experiences. When did we ever propose such a slogan? However, even though it was not proposed, some things like that came over with the [good ones] all the same, [especially] in the last seven years. Nonetheless, in general, we can’t say that we weren’t selective at all ... because we have been critical of dogmatism, and the source of dogmatism comes from Stalin.”

—Ibid., p. 401. Mátyás Rákosi was the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Hungary at the time of Hungarian Uprising in 1956. For another translation, see SSCM, pp. 287-8.

“It is good to have criticism. It would not be good to have no criticism, or to suppress criticism. It is this mistake that Stalin committed. Stalin did a lot of good things, but he also did some bad things. He confused the two; he used the methods that are for dealing with the enemy to deal with the people, with contradictions among the people. He wouldn’t let people say bad things about the government, or about the Communist Party; if you said anything bad or if there were any rustling in the air, any movement in the grass, he would say that you were a spy and have you arrested.”

—Speech at [a] Conference of Members and Cadres of Provincial-Level Organizations of [the] CPC in Shandong (March 18, 1957), WMZ2, pp. 419-420. For a different translation, see SSCM, p. 308.

“Of course what happens abroad also affects us. The Twentieth Congress [of the CPSU] which criticized Stalin, the incidents in Poland and Hungary, the worldwide anti-Soviet and anti-communist agitation, the speeches of Tito and Kardelj (have the Shandong newspapers carried this article?), all this has caused confusion in people’s thinking.”

—Talk at the Conference of Party Member Cadres of Shandong Provincial Organs, (March 18, 1957), SSCM, p. 299. Kardelj was the Vice President of Yugoslavia.

“[We] must clearly distinguish the two types of contradiction. The first type, contradictions between ourselves and the enemy, should not be mixed up with the second type, contradictions



among the people. That there are contradictions in socialist society, that contradictions persist in socialist society, this is something Lenin once pointed out. He recognized that there were contradictions in socialist society. During the first years of Stalin's leadership, the period following the death of Lenin, domestic life in the Soviet Union was still quite lively and not very different from ours today. There, too, were different parties, different factions, and well-known personages such as Trotsky. Trotsky had many followers, but he was perhaps only a democratic personage within the Communist party."

—On Ideological Work (Talk at a Conference Attended by Party Cadres from PLA Units under the Nanjing Command and from Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces), (March 19, 1957), SSCM, pp. 326-7.

"We must distinguish clearly between the two categories of contradictions. The first category, of contradictions between the enemy and ourselves, cannot be confused with the second category, of contradictions among the people. On the subject of the socialist society, [we must recognize that] it does have contradictions, and contradictions do exist [in it]. Lenin once made a directive on this point. He recognized that there are contradictions in socialist society. In the beginning, Stalin—in the period immediately after Lenin's death—[allowed for] a relative liveliness and activity in the domestic life in the Soviet Union. It was somewhat like what we have now [in our country]. They had all sorts of [political] parties and factions, even some well-known people like Trotsky. He had many people [with him], but he was sort of like a democratic personage within the Communist Party. Moreover, he played the role of a cheeky troublemaker and made trouble for us. There were also quite some other people in the society who were allowed to say all sorts of things, including criticizing the government. There was such a period. Then later, things didn't work. Furthermore, things became very dictatorial. [Stalin] would not allow for criticism. He was afraid of people who wanted to criticize, of letting a hundred flowers bloom. He would only allow for the blooming of fragrant flowers. He was afraid also of letting a hundred schools contend. At the slightest hint of suspicion, he would say that it was a counterrevolutionary [incident] and would have people arrested or executed. This is to confuse the two types of contradictions, to mistake the contradictions among the people for contradictions between the enemy and ourselves. Your Comrade Xu Jiatao of Nanjing said many students came to submit petitions to him. Their ranks, [he said,] were very orderly. [Your] provincial governor, Peng Chong, also said that they were very well disciplined. Along the way they have been very good. When they got to his place, as soon as they got in the door, they yelled 'Down with bureaucratism' and wanted certain problems resolved. In regard to these problems, as I see it, if these were brought in front of Stalin, I think a few people would have been arrested, and a few heads would surely have rolled. You call for the downfall of bureaucratism; is that not counterrevolution? In fact there was not a single counterrevolutionary; [all of them] were very good students. Moreover, that problem [indeed] ought to be resolved; there is indeed a bit of bureaucratism. This is because without the disturbance created by those overseas Chinese students, the problem was not well resolved."

—"On the Problem of Ideological Work" (March 20, 1957), WMZ2, pp. 439-440. This is probably a different version of the same speech as in the previous item, which would mean that either the date there (March 19th) or the date here is wrong. Apparently the "overseas Chinese

students” Mao referred to here meant students who either returned from abroad, or else students from overseas Chinese families, who were studying in China.

“Are there contradictions in socialist society? Lenin once spoke on such a problem, and his opinion was that contradictions would exist [in a socialist society]. Stalin, however, over a long period of time, in fact did not acknowledge that there would be contradictions in a socialist society. In Stalin’s later stages, people were not allowed to say bad things, or to criticize the Party or the government. In fact, what Stalin did was to confuse the contradictions among the people with the contradictions between the enemy and ourselves. He considered everyone who said bad things [about the Party] and gossiped [about the Party] as an enemy, and therefore [he] unjustly wronged many people. In the book ‘Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR,’ written in 1952, Stalin himself said that in socialist society there would be contradictions between the relations of production and the forces of production. Moreover, [he said] if [the contradictions] are not properly resolved, they can be transformed into antagonistic [contradictions]. Even so, Stalin said very little about the contradictions internal to socialist society, or the contradictions among the people. I believe that we should, today, openly discuss this problem, not only inside the Party, but we should also make this problem clear in the newspapers, and draw appropriate conclusions; that would be better.”

—Speech at a CPC Cadres Meeting in Shanghai (March 20, 1957), WMZ2, pp. 465-6.  
Alternative translation is in SSCM, pp. 352-3.

“XXX wouldn’t sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. It was not until the Chinese scolded and the British lent a hand that it was done.”

—Interjections at a Meeting During the Qingdao Conference (July 20, 1957), WMZ2, p. 647.  
The “XXX” name here (which was blocked out in the Red Guard collection), almost certainly refers to Stalin.

“The Resolution of the Eighth Party Congress declared that the primary contradiction is that between the advanced social system and the backward forces of production, but we cannot reason this way. Today there are contradictions, and in the future there will still be contradictions. When the cooperatives have all been transformed into state farms that pay wages, there will still be contradictions. Socialism is composed of two sectors: the system of public ownership and the system of collective ownership. In the future, contradictions will also arise between the two. The socialist system and the forces of production basically conform to each other, but there are still areas that do not conform completely; there are still shortcomings; [thus] to speak of perfect conformity is incorrect. Once Stalin mentioned complete conformity, problems emerged....”

—Speech at the Third Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee (Oct. 7, 1957), WMZ2, p. 692.  
This is a reference to Stalin’s views about the conformity of the relations of production to the forces of production as presented in his works *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* and *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. In a footnote the editors of this collection of Mao’s writings (John K. Leung & Michael Y. M. Kau) comment, in part:

“The criticism made by Mao in this passage is laden with Marxist theory-interpretation significance. The key lies in what Mao thought of the relations of production in the phase of socialist transition. The position that Stalin took (as Mao read it) appeared to be that in the Soviet system during the socialist phase, the relations of production, as part of the ‘system’ of socialism (and part of the superstructure) are basically in conformity with the proletarianized forces of production. This becomes a criterion by which the conclusion can be drawn that through the transformation of the system (from a capitalist-dominated one to a sovietized one) the socialist transition has already been basically achieved. What remains to be done would be to focus on developing the forces of production, on the one hand, and to deal with those remnants of the superstructure (ideology, education, laws, etc.) that are yet partially inconsistent with the sovietized system, on the other. In Mao’s view, this, joined with the ‘revisionist’ idea that the primary contradiction was the one between the backward forces of production and an already advanced social system, would give rise to what is labeled as the *wei shengchanli lun* (‘forces of production above all theory’), which focuses only on development and expansion of the forces of production, with little or no attention at all to continuing the struggle to transform the relations of production. Mao himself believed that the stage of socialist transition is a stage of revolution, not just a stage of peaceful, material expansion and development. In this phase, Mao believed, the struggle is to be concentrated on the transformation of the relations of production. Moreover, Mao tended to see the relations of production as part of the economic base. Thus he believed that, owing to the continued bourgeois influence in society (and in the economic system) during the stage of socialist revolution and transition, there was as yet an inconsistency (or contradiction) within the economic base itself that needed to be struggled over. It was therefore not merely an issue of contradiction between the superstructure and the base, but a twofold contradiction, one between the superstructure and the base, and the other in the base itself.” [WMZ2, pp. 694-5.]

“Incidentally, let me talk a bit here about where our opinions differ from those of the Soviet Union. First of all, on the question of Stalin, we have contradictions with Khrushchev. He made Stalin appear so terrible! We do not agree with that, because he was made to appear so ugly! This is not a matter for their country alone; it is a matter that concerns all countries. We hang Stalin’s portrait outside our Tiananmen; this is in accord with the wishes of the laboring people of the whole world, and it demonstrates our basic differences with Khrushchev. As for Stalin himself, you should also give him [an evaluation of] 30 per cent [bad] and 70 per cent [good]. Stalin’s achievements count for 70 per cent; his mistakes count for 30 per cent. Even this may not be accurate; [his] mistakes may only be 20 per cent or perhaps only 10 per cent, or perhaps a little more than [20 per cent]. In any case, Stalin’s achievements are primary while his shortcomings and mistakes are secondary. On this point we and Khrushchev hold differing opinions.”

—Speech at the Conclusion of the Third Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee (Oct. 9, 1957), version I, WMZ2, p. 707.

“I think that our declaration is good. We used a very good method to attain our goal, and that is the method of consulting [one another and talking things over. The declaration] upholds the sense of principle and yet has flexibility; it is a unity of principle and flexibility. Thus, an atmosphere of consultation has now been formed, whereas in the last stages of Stalin[’s time]

that was impossible. We have not forcibly imposed anything on anybody. It is not good to adopt a method of forcible imposition [in matters] among the people, especially among comrades. We have now replaced the method of suppression with the method of persuasion.”

—Speech at the Congress of Communist Parties and Workers’ Parties in the Socialist Countries (Nov. 16, 1957), WMZ2, p. 771. Mao was in the Soviet Union from Nov. 2 to Nov. 21, 1957; this excerpt is from one of several speeches he made while there.

“Stalin led the [Communist] Party of the Soviet Union in accomplishing great works. His achievements are primary, and [his] shortcomings and mistakes are secondary. However, over a long period of time, he did develop metaphysics and damage dialectics. The personality cult was metaphysics; no one was permitted to criticize him. As I see it, the forty years of the Soviet Union are a dialectical process [in themselves]. There were Lenin’s dialectics, [and then with] Stalin there were many metaphysical viewpoints. Some [of these] viewpoints were enacted, and when they reached a point of extreme, they were bound to move toward their opposite, and bring back dialectics again. I am very happy that XXXXXX said, at the commemorative celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, that contradictions do exist in socialist society. I am very glad that the philosophical circles in the Soviet Union have produced many articles that discuss the internal contradictions in socialist society. These articles also discussed the problem of the contradictions between socialism and capitalism; these are problems of contradictions of two different types altogether.”

—Speech at the Congress of Communist Parties and Workers’ Parties in Socialist Countries (Nov. 18, 1957), WMZ2, p. 792. Despite the identical title, this is a different speech from the one in the previous quotation. “XXXXXX” represents 6 Chinese characters deleted from the Red Guard text which probably stood for “Comrade Khrushchev”.

[Stuart Schram writing:] “When he [Mao] visited Moscow for the second time, in November 1957 to attend the conference of Communist and workers’ parties, Mao remarked that he still had a ‘belly full of pent-up anger, mainly directed against Stalin’, though he would not elaborate on the reasons, because it was all in the past. He then proceeded, in characteristic fashion, to do precisely that: ‘During the Stalin era, nobody dared to speak up. I have come to Moscow twice and the first time was depressing. Despite all the talk about ‘fraternal parties’ there was really no equality.’ Now, he said, we ‘must admit that our Soviet comrades’ style of work has changed a lot.’”

—Nov. 1957. Quoted in TMT, p. 152.

“The newspapers need leadership, but the leadership has to be correct. [It must] conform to the objective situation. Those who do not conform to the objective condition must be criticized. Marxism-Leninism handles things according to the [appropriate] conditions, and furthermore, it pays attention to objective effect. Why did the Chinese Revolution meet with success? It was because the Third International was dissolved; otherwise [the Chinese Revolution] could not achieve success. Some leaders ruin things because they do not conform to the situation. It is only because Lenin refused to recognize the Second International that the October Revolution achieved success. The Second International was revisionist, and the Third International was very

good at the beginning, but it became dogmatist later. Among the leaders of [the Third International,] Stalin and Bukharin were not very good. Dimitrov was a very good leader because, first, he opposed fascism and second, he emphasized internationalism.”

—Directive on Journalism Work (1957), WMZ2, pp. 805-6.

“The Eighth Congress spoke of the contradiction between the advanced social system and the backward forces of production. That was [in reference to] a matter of the forces of production, not to a matter of the relationship among human beings. The problem of the relations of production among human beings has already been [basically] resolved, but has not been completely resolved (see page 4 of the document of the Eighth Congress). [As for the question that is] proposed—whether or not the socialist system is conducive to the development of the forces of production, our answer [to this question is that it] is generally conducive. Stalin thinks that [the socialist system] is completely conducive to [the development of the forces of production]; there are problems with that. In the future, a number of years from now, when the forces of production have been developed, there will [still] be some contradictions between the system of collective ownership and the development of the [forces of] production. Right now the relations of production are conducive [to the development of the forces of production]. How do we know they are conducive? [The basic fact is that] the cooperatives have [promoted the] development of production! When we compare our system with India, India increased steel production by three million tons in its first five-year plan, and we increased ours by four million tons. Can you say our system is not good? Our relations of production are basically conducive to the development of the forces of production, but there are still some shortcomings. Several decades from now, when the forces of production have developed, the law of value will become useless, and there will be no need for currency.”

—“On the Question of the Primary Contradiction in the Transitional Period” (1957), WMZ2, p. 812.

“Even in 1949 when we were about to cross the Yangtze River, someone [emphasis added] still wanted to prevent us. According to him we should under no circumstances cross the Yangtze. If we did so America would send troops to China and become directly involved in China’s Civil War and the South and North dynasties would reappear in China.

“I did not listen to what they [sic] said. We crossed the Yangtze. America did not send troops to China and there were no South and North dynasties. If we really had followed his words surely there would be a situation of South and North dynasties.

“Later on I met that person who intended to prevent us from crossing the Yangtze. His first words in our conversation were: ‘The victor bears no blame.’

“I had not listened to him. As a result he not only did not blame me. On the contrary, he recognized me as the victor. It is very important that one should analyze and solve problems on one’s own and always seek truth from facts.”

—Mao's comments in 1957, as recorded by Wang Fangming of Beijing People's University, People's Daily, Jan. 2, 1979. English translation in NE, p. 15. The "someone" referred to was of course Stalin.

"Internationally we should be on friendly terms with the Soviet Union, all the people's democracies and the communist parties and working classes of all nations; we should pay proper attention to internationalism, and learn from the good points of the Soviet Union and other foreign countries. This a principle. But there are two methods of learning: one is merely to imitate, and the other is to apply the creative spirit. Learning should be combined with creativity. To import Soviet codes and conventions inflexibly is to lack the creative spirit.

"From its foundation up to the Northern Expedition (from 1921 to 1927) our Party was comparatively lively, even allowing for Ch'en Tu-hsiu's bourgeois ideology dressed up as Marxism. We founded our Party in the third year following the victory of the October Revolution. Those who founded the Party were all young people who had participated in the May Fourth Movement and been influenced by it. After the October Revolution, while Lenin was still alive, while the class struggle was very acute and Stalin had still not come to power, they too were full of life. The origin of Ch'en Tu-hsiu-ism lay in foreign social democracy and our native bourgeoisie. During this period, though there occurred the mistakes of Ch'en Tu-hsiu-ism, generally speaking there was no dogmatism.

"From the beginning of the Civil War period up to the Tsunyi Conference (from 1927 to 1935) three separate 'leftist' lines arose in the Chinese Party, and the one from 1934 to 1935 was the worst. At that time the Soviet Union had won victory over the Trotskyites, though on the theoretical plane they had only defeated the Deborin school. The Chinese 'left' opportunists had nearly all been influenced while in the Soviet Union. Of course, this is not to say that all those who went to Moscow were dogmatists. Among the many who were in the Soviet Union at the time, some were dogmatists, others were not; some were in touch with reality, others had no contact with reality but saw only foreign conditions. What is more, Stalin's rule was beginning to be consolidated (it became firmly consolidated after the purge of counter-revolutionaries). The Comintern at that time was [run by] Bukharin, Pikov and Zinoviev, while the head of the Eastern Bureau was Kuusinen and the head of the Far East Department was Mif. XXX [Kuusinen?] was a good comrade, humane, creative, but a bit too nice a chap. Mif's influence was the greater. These were the conditions which enabled dogmatism to develop, and some Chinese comrades were influenced by it too. At that time Wang Ming and others set themselves up as the so-called '28 ½ Bolsheviks'. When several hundred were studying in the Soviet Union, how was it that there were only 28 ½? It was because they were so terribly 'left' that they became self-restricting and isolated, thus reducing the Party's contacts."

—"Talks at the Chengtu Conference" (March 1958): Talk of March 10th, CMTTP, pp. 96-97. Ch'en Tu-hsiu (1879-1942) was the head of the CPC from its founding in 1921 until the disaster of 1927 when Chiang Kai-shek turned on and murdered thousands of communists.

"Having cleared away blind faith, we no longer have any spiritual burdens. Buddhas are made several times life-size in order to frighten people. When heroes and warriors appear on the stage they are made to look quite unlike ordinary people. Stalin was that kind of person. The Chinese

people had got so used to being slaves that they seemed to want to go on. When Chinese artists painted pictures of me together with Stalin, they always made me a little bit shorter, thus blindly knuckling under to the moral pressure exerted by the Soviet Union at that time. Marxism-Leninism looks at everyone on equal terms, and all people should be treated as equals.”

—Ibid., p. 99. [I’ve read that Mao was 5 feet, 8 inches tall—quite tall for a Chinese man of his era—though some Internet sources say he was even taller. According to the CelebHeights.com website, Stalin was only 5 feet, 6 inches tall, though some sources say he was even shorter. In any case, it seems that Mao was actually noticeably taller than Stalin. —Ed.]

“Khrushchev’s complete demolition of Stalin at one blow was also a kind of pressure, and the majority of people within the Chinese Party did not agree with it. Others wished to submit to this pressure and do away with the cult of the individual. There are two kinds of cult of the individual. One is correct, such as that of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the correct side of Stalin. These we ought to revere and continue to revere for ever. It would not do not to revere them. As they held truth in their hands, why should we not revere them? We believe in truth; truth is the reflection of objective existence. A squad should revere its squad leader; it would be quite wrong not to. Then there is the incorrect kind of cult of the individual in which there is no analysis, simply blind obedience. This is not right. Opposition to the cult of the individual may also have one of two aims: one is opposition to an incorrect cult, and the other is opposition to reverence for others and desire for reverence for oneself. The question at issue is not whether or not there should be a cult of the individual, but rather whether or not the individual concerned represents the truth. If he does, then he should be revered. If truth is not present, even collective leadership will be no good. Throughout its history, our Party has stressed the combination of the role of the individual with collective leadership. When Stalin was demolished some people applauded for their own personal reasons, that is to say because they wanted others to revere them.”

—Ibid., pp. 99-100.

“When Stalin was criticized in 1956, we were on the one hand happy, but on the other hand apprehensive. It was completely necessary to remove the lid, to break down blind faith, to release the pressure, and to emancipate thought. But we did not agree with demolishing him at one blow. They do not hang up his picture, but we do. In 1950 I argued with Stalin in Moscow for two months. On the questions of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, the Chinese Eastern Railway, the joint-stock companies and the border we adopted two attitudes: one was to argue when the other side made proposals we did not agree with, and the other was to accept their proposal if they absolutely insisted. This was out of consideration for the interests of socialism. Then there were the two ‘colonies’, that is the North-East and Sinkiang [Xinjiang], where people of any third country were not allowed to reside. Now this has been rescinded. After the criticism of Stalin, the victims of blind faith had their eyes opened a bit. In order that our comrades recognize that the old ancestor [Stalin] also had his faults, we should apply analysis to him, and not have blind faith in him. We should accept everything good in Soviet experience, and reject what is bad. Now we are a bit more skilful in this, and understand the Soviet Union a bit better, and understand ourselves.

—Ibid., p. 101. In the 1950 treaty Stalin insisted on the creation of joint-stock companies in Xinjiang to develop oil and metal production. This continued the Soviet economic exploitation of the area that had already begun under the Nationalist regime. The USSR also kept control, for a time, of two important military bases in Manchuria and de facto control of the Chinese Eastern Railway which (among other things) was used to transport military supplies to those bases. A secret protocol to the 1950 treaty prohibited the Chinese from allowing citizens of any third country to participate in trade or industry in Xinjiang or Manchuria. —Ed.

“The Chinese revolution won victory by acting contrary to Stalin’s will. The fake foreign devil [in Lu Hsun’s True Story of Ah Q] ‘did not allow people to make revolution’. But our Seventh Congress advocated going all out to mobilize the masses and to build up all available revolutionary forces in order to establish a new China. During the quarrel with Wang Ming from 1937 to August 1938, we put forward ten great policies, while Wang Ming produced sixty policies. If we had followed Wang Ming’s, or in other words Stalin’s methods the Chinese revolution couldn’t have succeeded. When our revolution succeeded, Stalin said it was a fake. We did not argue with him, and as soon as we fought the war to resist America and aid Korea, our revolution became a genuine one [in his eyes].”

—Ibid., pp. 102-3.

“We must respect the classics but we must not follow them blindly. Marxism was itself created, not copied or lifted straight from books. On this point Stalin was relatively good. The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union says in its conclusion: ‘Particular points of Marxist principle which are not in accord with reason may be changed, such as the principle that one country cannot be victorious.’ [Referring to the abandonment of the previous doctrine that socialism cannot be victorious in a single country. —Ed.] ...

“Once we give in to blind faith our minds become cramped and our thought cannot burst out of its confinement. Unless you have a conquering spirit it is very dangerous to study Marxism-Leninism. Stalin could be said to have had this spirit, though it became tarnished. The Leninist foundation of his writing on linguistics and economics was relatively correct—basically correct. But there are some issues worth studying, for example the role of the theory of value in the socialist stage.”

—“Talks at the Chengtu Conference” (March 1958): Talk of March 22nd, CMTTP, p. 115.

“The Chinese revolution achieved victory against Stalin’s will. Imitation foreign devils did not permit us to carry out the revolution [to the end].”

—Speech at the Conference in Hankou (April 6, 1958), quoted in UP, p. 298. The term “imitation foreign devil” comes from a novel by the famous revolutionary writer Lu Xun [Lu Hsun] where one Chinese individual who refused to allow others to revolt was called that.

“This Comrade Stalin of ours had something of the flavor of the mandarins of old... In the past, the relations between us and the Soviet Union were those between father and son, cat and mouse.”



—April, 1958. Quoted in TMT, p. 154.

“I would like to ask that the book, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on Communism (Stalin didn’t do very well), be printed in every province and widely distributed for everyone to read. It’s very enlightening, although there are still some inadequacies, because of the limitations imposed by conditions in [the authors’] times. They had little experience, so naturally their views are vague and inexplicit. Don’t think the ancestors all fart fragrantly and fart no foul farts. [When you] talk about the future, there must inevitably be some vague spots.”

—Talks at the Beidaihe Conference (Draft Transcript) (Aug. 17-30, 1958), SSCM, p. 441.

“Provincial and regional committees must study this book [Stalin’s Economic Problems of the Socialism in the USSR]. In the past everyone read it without gaining a deep impression. It should be studied in conjunction with China’s actual circumstances. The first three chapters contain much that is worth paying attention to, much that is correct, although there are places where perhaps Stalin himself did not make things clear enough. For example, in chapter 1 he says only a few things about objective laws and how to go about planning the economy, without unfolding his ideas; or, it may be that to his mind Soviet planning of the economy already reflected objective governing principles. On the question of heavy industry, light industry, and agriculture, the Soviet Union did not lay enough emphasis on the latter two and had losses as a result. In addition, they did not do a good job of combing the immediate and the long-term interests of the people. In the main they walked on one leg. Comparing the planning, which of us after all had the better adapted ‘planned proportionate development?’ Another point: Stalin emphasized only technology, technical cadre. He wanted nothing but technology, nothing but cadre; no politics, no masses. This too is walking on one leg! And in industry they walk on one leg when they pay attention to heavy industry but not to light industry. Furthermore, they did not point out the main aspects of the contradictions in the relationships among departments of heavy industry. They exaggerated the importance of heavy industry, claiming that steel was the foundation, machinery the heart and soul. Our position is that grain is the mainstay of agriculture, steel of industry, and that if steel and is taken as the mainstay, then once we have the raw material the machine industry will follow along. Stalin raised questions in chapter 1: he suggested the objective governing principles, but he failed to provide satisfactory answers.

“In chapter 2 he discusses commodities, in chapter 3 the law of value. Relatively speaking, I favor many of the views expressed. To divide production into two major departments and to say that the means of production are not commodities—these points deserve study. In Chinese agriculture there are still many means of production that should be commodities. My view is that the last of the three appended letters [appendices to Stalin’s pamphlet] is entirely wrong. It expresses a deep uneasiness, a belief that the peasantry cannot be trusted to release agricultural machinery but would hang on to it. On the one hand Stalin says that the means of production belong to state ownership. On the other, he says that the peasants cannot afford them. The fact is that he is deceiving himself. The state controlled the peasantry very, very tightly, inflexibly. For the two transitions Stalin failed to find the proper ways and means, a vexing matter for him. [The “two transitions” are 1) from collective ownership (such as in the People’s Communes) to ownership by the whole people (state ownership, with the peasants transformed into farm

workers); and 2) from a socialist distribution system (“to each according to his work”) to a communist distribution system (“to each according to his need”). —Ed.]

“Capitalism leaves behind it the commodity form, which we must still retain for the time being. Commodity exchange laws governing value play no regulating role in our production. This role is played by planning, by the great leap forward under planning, by politics-in-command. Stalin speaks only of the production relations, not of the superstructure, nor of the relationship between superstructure and economic base. Chinese cadres participate in production; workers participate in management. Sending cadres down to lower levels to be tempered, discarding old rules and regulations—all these pertain to the superstructure, to ideology. Stalin mentions economics only, not politics. He may speak of selfless labor, but in reality even an extra hour’s labor is begrudged. There is no selflessness at all. The role of people, the role of the laborer—these are not mentioned. If there were no communist movement it is hard to imagine making the transition to communism. ‘All people are for me, I for all people.’ [Perhaps this should be translated: “All for one and one for all.” —Ed.] This does not belong. It ends up with everything being connected to the self. Some say Marx said it. If he did let’s not make propaganda out of it. ‘All people for me,’ means everybody for me, the individual. ‘I am for all.’ Well, how many can you be for?”

—“Concerning Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR” (Nov. [9], 1958), CSE, pp. 129-31. For an alternate translation see below and SSCM, pp. 461-5.

“With respect to socialism and communism, what is meant by constructing socialism? We raise two points: (1) The concentrated manifestation of constructing socialism is making socialist, all-embracing public ownership [ownership by the whole people] a reality. (2) Constructing socialism means turning commune collective ownership into public ownership. Some comrades disapprove of drawing the line between these two types of ownership system, as if the communes were completely publicly owned. In reality there are two systems. One type is public ownership, as in the Anshan Iron and Steel Works, the other is commune-large collective ownership. If we do not raise this, what is the use of socialist construction? Stalin drew the line when he spoke of three conditions. These three basic conditions make sense and may be summarized as follows: increase social output; raise collective ownership to public ownership; go from exchange of commodities to exchange of products, from exchange value to use value.

“...Stalin was speaking of culture when he proposed the three conditions, the physical development and education of the whole people. For this he proposed four conditions: (a) six hours’ work per day; (b) combining technical education with work; (c) improving residential conditions; (d) raising wages. Raising wages and lowering prices are particularly helpful here, but the political conditions are missing.”

—Ibid., p. 133.

“Stalin’s book [Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR] from first to last says nothing about the superstructure. It is not concerned with people; it considers things, not people. Does the kind of supply system for consumer goods help spur economic development or not? He should have touched on this at the least. Is it better to have commodity production or is it better not to?

Everyone has to study this. Stalin's point of view in his last letter [appendix to his pamphlet] is almost altogether wrong. The basic error is mistrust of the peasants.

"Parts of the first, second, and third chapters are correct; other parts could have been clearer. For example, the discussion on planned economy is not complete. The rate of development of the Soviet economy is not high enough, although it is faster than the capitalists' rate. Relations between agriculture and industry, as well as between light and heavy industry, are not clearly explained.

"It looks as if they have had serious losses. The relationship between long- and short-term interests has not seen any spectacular developments. They walk on one leg, we walk on two. They believe that technology decides everything, that cadres decide everything, speaking only of 'expert,' never of 'red,' only of the cadres, never of the masses. This is walking on one leg. As far as heavy industry goes, they have failed to find the primary contradiction, calling steel the foundation, machinery the heart and innards, coal the food.... For us steel is the mainstay, the primary contradiction in industry, while foodgrains are the mainstay in agriculture. Other things develop proportionally.

"In the first chapter he discusses grasping the laws, but without proposing a method. On commodity production and the law of value he has a number of views that we approve of ourselves, but there are problems as well. Limiting commodity production to the means of subsistence is really rather doubtful. Mistrust of the peasants is the basic viewpoint of the third letter. Essentially Stalin did not discover a way to make the transition from collective to public ownership. Commodity production and exchange are forms we have kept, while in connection with the law of value we must speak of planning and at the same time politics-in-command. They speak only of the production relations, not of the superstructure nor politics, nor the role of the people. Communism cannot be reached unless there is a communist movement."

—"Critique of Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR", CSE, pp. 135-6. This document seems to be a different report of Mao's speech "Concerning Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR" (Nov. 1958), which is excerpted above. In this version there follows 33 specific comments on particular passages in Stalin's pamphlet, most at least partly critical. The opening comments above are a fairly good summation of all these specific comments.

"One has to look at the things Stalin wrote [on the economics of socialism]. His strong point is that he alone talks about a socialist economy, but his greatest shortcoming is that he sets up a rigid framework, saying that the kolkhozy [Soviet collective farms —Ed.] are willing to exchange commodities but won't go for allocations [of goods and capital by planning authorities]. This was because [he] did not want uninterrupted revolution, but wanted to consolidate the socialist order. The Russian peasants cannot be that selfish; it cannot be that they don't want uninterrupted revolution. Russia has built up a socialist order, but this type of order cannot be consolidated. With us it's the other way round. We disrupt a part of the socialist order; the supply system [i.e., payment in kind] is what disrupts that order."

—Talks at the First Zhengzhou Conference (Nov. 6-10, 1958), Talk of Nov. 6th, SSCM, p. 444. (This is another translation of the talks excerpted above from A Critique of Soviet Economics.)

“This transition [to the completion of socialism] seemed immensely difficult to Stalin and he didn’t set a deadline [specifying] how many years would be needed. This is the first transition [i.e., that from collective ownership to ownership by the whole people]. The second transition is that from ‘To each according to his work’ to ‘To each according to his need.’...

“In the womb of the mother is the baby, and socialism contains the sprouts of communism. Stalin failed to see this dialectical law.”

—Talks at the First Zhengzhou Conference (Nov. 6-10, 1958), Talk of Nov. 6th, SSCM, pp. 445-6.

“The Soviet collective villages don’t engage in industry; they only do agriculture, and agriculture, furthermore, that goes with planting large areas and [garnering] small harvests. That’s why they don’t manage to make the transition. Soviet socialism has collective ownership and ownership of the whole people. Stalin’s transition to communism was hardly possible; there was no transition to the ownership by the whole people; he did not promote the elements of communism at all, split heavy and light industry, and openly advocated putting but small emphasis on the production of consumer goods. Various differences became greater.

“[We] have to reread Stalin’s Economic Problems of Socialism and look at the Collection of Articles on the Problem of Bourgeois Right.”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 448.

“The law of value is an instrument; it only has calculating functions, but not the function of regulating production. Stalin’s writings contain a lot of good things.”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 453.

“Shanxi province talks about three victories: in industry, agriculture, and ideology. That is a good slogan. Going at it by leaving out one would be like Iron Crutch Li. Neglect agriculture and you become a Stalin. Those doing agriculture must be hell-bent on doing agriculture.”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 469.

“Stalin’s statement, ‘One has to study this economic law [of balanced development of the national economy], has to master it, to learn to apply it with full understanding, and to compile such plans as fully reflect the requirements of this law,’ is excellent. We still have not fully mastered this economic law nor have we learned to apply it with full understanding....

“Stalin stops here and does not develop this question further. I have my doubts as to what level he reached in his studies. Why didn’t he walk on two legs? Why does heavy industry need so many rules and regulations?”

—Ibid., SSCM, pp. 471-2. Mao is here continuing his discussion of Stalin’s Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR.

“Our [sphere] of ownership by the whole people is very small; [and] only when all means of production are [thus] owned and the social product has become abundant will we be able to abolish commerce. It seems our economists have failed to understand this point. I use dead Stalin to bear down on the living. Stalin still retained his reservations on the question of the abolition of commodity production after [eventual] success of the English revolution... I’m afraid at least a part [of commodity production] can’t be abolished; Stalin, however, does not arbitrarily decide the question; he does not give a conclusion.”

—Ibid., SSCM, p. 473.

“(2) Planned and proportionate [development:] if steel goes up, everything else goes up, too, and the sixty-four kinds of rare metals must all be in proportion. What is proportion? At present no one among us has any idea what proportion is. I don’t know what it is; perhaps you’re a bit brighter. What planned and proportionate is has to be gradually figured out. Engels said one has to recognize objective law, master it, and apply it with full understanding. I think Stalin’s recognition [of this law] was not complete either; in [his] application [of it] there was no flexibility, and as to application with full understanding, in that [he] was even more deficient. His [handling of the relationship] between light and heavy industry was not so correct; too much emphasis on heavy industry, is like Iron Crutch Li, ... At present we have achieved some proportionality, namely by walking on two legs, with heavy industry, light industry and agriculture.”

—Talks at the Wuchang Conference (Nov. 21-23, 1958), SSCM, pp. 481-2.

“At the Zhengzhou conference there were five criteria [put forward], [but] Shanxi had objections; the essential manifestation for the completion of the building of socialism is ownership by the whole people. That is different from what Stalin proclaimed in 1938. What does complete achievement of ownership by the whole people mean? What does completion of the building of socialism mean? Stalin’s two reports of 1936 and 1938 (the former being the report on the constitution, the latter the report to the Eighteenth Party Congress) put forward two indicators: one was the extinction of classes, and the other was that industry should occupy a 70 percent proportion [of the economy]. But [since then], the Soviet Union has gone through [another] twenty years and XXXX [probably meaning “Khrushchev”] will have another twelve years; that is after thirty-two years they will eventually make the transition, and at that time collective ownership and ownership by the whole people will finally merge. On this question, we don’t do things according to their pattern. We talk about the five criteria; and we don’t say that when industry accounts for 70 percent, that means the building [of socialism] is completed.... For us, the criterion for the completion of the building of socialism will be the unification of the systems of ownership. Everything will be owned by the whole people. We take the achievement of ownership by the whole people as the primary criterion. By this criterion, the Soviet Union has not completed the building of socialism. They still have two systems of ownership. This has given rise to a question: people all over the world ask, has the Soviet Union even now still not completed the building of socialism?”

—Ibid., SSCM, pp. 487-8. The two systems of ownership being referred to here are cooperatives (such as the People's Communes in China or the Collective Farms in the USSR) and state ownership.

“In 1936, Stalin proclaimed the abolition of classes—so why in 1937 did he kill so many people, and [why were] spies so thick on the ground? I think one has to leave this question of the abolition of classes in suspense, and that it's best not to proclaim it hastily. In the last analysis, at what time would the proclamation of the abolition of classes be most advantageous? If one does proclaim the abolition, the landlords will all be peasants, and the capitalists workers: Is that advantageous or not? The bourgeoisie are permitted to enter the people's communes, but they must still wear their bourgeois hats; fixed interest is not abolished. In view of Stalin's too early proclamation, one should not be hasty in proclaiming the abolition of classes, and I'm afraid one can only proclaim it when there is fundamentally no more harm in doing so. Is the abolition of classes within the Soviet intelligentsia in any way complete? In my opinion, not so.”

—Ibid., SSCM, pp. 491-2.

“Of course, there are periods when [commodity production] obstructs the development of production. So the statements in the Forty Points [the 12-year Agricultural Program] dealing with commodities are inappropriate; they are still written according to Stalin's [opinions]. But Stalin did not make clear the relationship between the means of livelihood produced by state-owned [industries] and those produced by collective farms. Would you all please discuss this; it is in the third edition of [the Soviet textbook] Political Economy. As to the rest there is little to change. Thus one can repudiate only a part of Stalin's things and should not throw them out altogether. The reason being that he is scientific, [and] to repudiate him altogether would not be good. Who was the first to write a study of the political economy of socialism? It was none other than Stalin. Of course, there are partial shortcomings and mistakes in this book. Such as in [his comments on] the third letter [where he says] agricultural machinery should not be sold to the collective farms, in order to keep a hold of the peasants' pigtails. He laid down the rule that they should have only the right to use, but not the right of ownership; this simply [demonstrates] a lack of trust in the peasants, whereas we gave [the machinery] to the cooperatives...”

—Ibid., SSCM, pp. 493-4.

[Stuart Schram writing:] “In 1960, discussing the Soviet Constitution, Mao Tse-tung said that this Constitution gave the workers the right to work, to rest, and to education, but that it gave the people no right to supervise the state, the economy, culture or education, whereas these were the most basic rights of the people under socialism.”

—Quoted in TMT, pp. 187-8. This constitution was the one prepared under Stalin's direct supervision, and is often called the “Stalin constitution”. For similar comments see also CSE, p. 61.

“On page 339 [of the Soviet textbook Political Economy] it says that the land taken from the rich peasants and given to the poor and middle peasants was land the government had expropriated and then parceled out. This looks at the matter as a grant by royal favor, forgetting that class

struggles and mass mobilizations had been set in motion, a right deviationist point of view. Our approach was to rely on the poor peasants, to unite with the majority of middle peasants (lower middle peasants) and seize the land from the landlord class. While the party did play a leading role, it was against doing everything itself and thus substituting for the masses. Indeed, its concrete practice was to ‘pay call on the poor to learn of their grievances,’ to identify activist elements, to strike roots and pull things together, to consolidate nuclei, to promote the voicing of grievances, and to organize the class ranks—all for the purpose of unfolding the class struggle.”

—“Reading Notes on the Soviet Text Political Economy” (c. 1960), CSE, p. 44. Mao is explaining here the difference in the approach to land reform in China as compared with how it was done in the Soviet Union under Stalin’s leadership. Much of the rest of this document has similar implicit criticism of Stalin and his approach to collectivization.

“Priority growth in producing the means of production is an economic rule for expanded reproduction common to all societies. If there are no priorities in producing the means of production in capitalist society there can be no expanded reproduction. In Stalin’s time, due to special emphasis on priority development of heavy industry, agriculture was neglected in the [economic] plans. Eastern Europe has had similar problems in the past few years. Our approach has been to make priority development of heavy industry the condition for putting into effect concurrent promotion of industry and agriculture, as well as some other concurrent programs....

“The experience of the Soviet Union, no less than our own, proves that if agriculture does not develop, if light industry does not develop, it hurts the development of heavy industry.”

—Ibid., p. 76-77.

“In the chapter [of the Soviet textbook Political Economy] on the collective farm system there is continual discussion of individual material interest.... The present special emphasis on material interest is for a reason. In the time of Stalin there was excessive emphasis on collective interest; individual gain was neglected. The public was overemphasized, the private underemphasized. Now they have gone to the opposite extreme, overemphasizing material incentive, neglecting collective interest.”

—Ibid., p. 94. (We believe that Mao is saying here that in the Stalin era the peasants were called upon to work hard for the public good, but that they were squeezed too hard and had little left for themselves. —Ed.)

“The text [the Soviet textbook] speaks vaguely of the road ahead, but the moment it comes to concrete measures it loses all clarity. In many ways (mainly production) the Soviets continue to progress, but with respect to the production relations fundamentally they have ceased to progress.”

—Ibid., p. 101. (When did the Soviets stop progressing when it came to the transformation of production relations? Mao does not explicitly say here, but the whole thrust of his reading notes seems to suggest that it was during the Stalin era itself. —Ed.)

“In Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, Stalin offered arguments about the two world markets. The [Soviet] text here emphasizes peaceful competition between the two systems and building up ‘peacefully developing’ economic relations. This turns the actually existing two world markets into two economic systems within a unified world market—a step back from Stalin’s view.

“Between the two economic systems there is in fact not only competition but also fierce, broad-ranging struggle, a struggle the text has kept its distance from.”

—Ibid., p. 105.

“[Section] 64. Criticism of Stalin

“Stalin’s Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, like his other works, contains erroneous arguments. But the two accusations referred to on page 681 [of the Soviet textbook Political Economy] are not convincing.

“One accusation is that Stalin held that ‘circulation of commodities seems to have already become an obstacle to the development of the productive forces. The necessity for gradually making the transition to direct exchanges of production between industry and agriculture is fully formed.’

“In this book Stalin said that when there are two kinds of ownership system then there is commodity production. He said that in the enterprises of the collective farms, although the means of production (land, tools, etc.) belong to the state, the goods produced are all the property of the separate collectives. The reason is that the labor on the collectives (like the seeds) is owned by the collectives, while the land that the state has given them for permanent use is in fact controlled by the collectives as if it were their own property. Under such conditions ‘the collective farms are willing to release into circulation what they produce only in the commodity form, in expectation of obtaining the commodities they need in exchange. At the present time the collective farms will not enter into any economic relations other than exchange through purchase and sales.’

“Stalin criticized the current view in the Soviet Union that advocated doing away with commodity production, holding that commodity production was no less necessary than it was thirty years earlier when Lenin declared the need for bending every effort to develop commodity circulation.

“The [Soviet] text says that Stalin seemed to be advocating instant elimination of commodities. This accusation is difficult to make good. As to the question of commodity exchange, for Stalin it was only a hypothesis. For he had even said, ‘There is no need to promote this system with urgency; it must be decided according to the degree of accumulation of goods manufactured in the cities.’

“Another accusation is that Stalin underestimated the workings of the law of value in the sphere of production and especially with reference to the means of production. ‘In the sphere of socialist



production the law of value plays no regulating role. This role is played by the law of planned proportional development and state planned economy.’ This argument offered by the text is in reality Stalin’s own argument. Even though the text says that the means of production are commodities, nonetheless, in the first place, it must say that they are in the category of ownership by the whole people. Purchase and sale of the means of production in no way changes ownership. In the second place, the text ought to concede that the law of value functions differently in the sphere of production and in the process of circulation. All these arguments are consistent with Stalin’s. One real difference between Stalin and Khrushchev is that Stalin opposed selling such means of production as tractors, etc., to the collective farms while Khrushchev sold them.”

—Ibid., pp. 105-6.

“The first edition of this [Soviet] text [Political Economy] appeared in early 1955. But the basic framework seems to have been set even before then. And it looks as if the model Stalin set at that time was not very enlightening.”

—Ibid., p. 109.

“The Marxist philosophy of the proletarian class is even more vitally concerned to serve contemporary political tasks. For China, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin are necessary reading. That comes first. But communists of any country and the proletarian philosophical circles of any country must create new theory, write new works, produce their own theoreticians to serve the political tasks facing them.”

—Ibid., p. 115. Interestingly enough, the 1967 version of this work of Mao’s, which was circulated in CPC party circles, had the words “and Stalin” deleted here.

“In 1928 the Central Committee of the CPSU passed a resolution which said: ‘We will be able to solve the task of overtaking and surpassing the capitalist countries technically and economically only when the party and the worker and peasant masses get mobilized to the limit.’... This is very well put. And this is exactly what we are now doing. At that time Stalin had nothing else to rely on except the masses, so he demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses. Afterward, when they had realized some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses.”

—Ibid., p. 119.

“Speaking generally, it is we Chinese who have achieved understanding of the objective world of China, not the comrades concerned with Chinese questions in the Communist International. These comrades in the Communist International simply did not understand, or we could say they utterly failed to understand, Chinese society, the Chinese nation or the Chinese revolution. For a long time even we did not have a clear understanding of the objective world of China, let alone the foreign comrades.”

—From a speech on Jan. 30, 1962. Quoted in TMT, p. 148.

“In 1945 Stalin attempted to hold back the progress of the Chinese revolution. He said that it was improper for us to fight a civil war and it was necessary for us to cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek. He even stated that otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. [Fortunately,] at that time we did not follow his instruction and won the revolution.”

—Speech at the 10th Plenum of the 8th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (Sept. 24, 1962), quoted in UP, p. 298. (The next item is an alternate translation and expansion of this passage.)

“They [the Soviets] did not permit China to make revolution: that was in 1945. Stalin wanted to prevent China from making a revolution, saying that we should not have a civil war and should cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek, otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. But we did not do what he said. The revolution was victorious. After the victory of the revolution he next suspected China of being a Yugoslavia, and that I would become a second Tito. Later, when I went to Moscow to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance, we had to go through another struggle. He was not willing to sign a treaty. After two months of negotiations he at last signed. When did Stalin begin to have confidence in us? It was the time of the Resist America, Aid Korea campaign, from the winter of 1950. He then came to believe that we were not Tito, not Yugoslavia.”

—Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC (Sept. 24, 1962), CMTTP, p. 191. (Most of this passage is also in TMT, pp. 146-7.)

[K'ang Sheng speaking:] “Kautsky’s economic doctrines were somewhat more enlightened than those of Khrushchev, and Yugoslavia is also somewhat more enlightened than the Soviet Union. After all, Djilas said a few good things about Stalin, he said that on Chinese problems Stalin made a self-criticism.”

Mao speaking:] “Stalin felt that he had made mistakes in dealing with Chinese problems, and they were no small mistakes.”

—Talk on Questions of Philosophy (Aug. 18, 1964), CMTTP, p. 227.

“It used to be said that there were three great laws of dialectics, then Stalin said that there were four. In my view there is only one basic law and that is the law of contradiction. Quality and quantity, positive and negative, external appearance and essence, content and form, necessity and freedom, possibility and reality, etc., are all cases of the unity of opposites.”

—Speech (on Philosophy) at Hangchow, Dec. 21, 1965, CMTTP, p. 240.

“Why did we make this division into first and second lines? The first reason is that my health is not very good; the second was the lesson of the Soviet Union. Malenkov was not mature enough, and before Stalin died he had not wielded power. Every time he proposed a toast, he fawned and flattered. I wanted to establish their prestige before I died; I never imagined that things might move in the opposite direction.”

—Talk at the Report Meeting, (Oct. 24, 1966), CMTTP, p. 266. Mao is implicitly criticizing Stalin here for not having better trained his successors, and is also admitting that he is having a tough job doing so as well. (For an explanation of “first and second lines” see the quote after the next.)

“In 1936 Stalin talked about the elimination of class struggle, but in 1939 he carried out another purge of counter-revolutionaries. Wasn’t that class struggle too?”

—Ibid., p. 269.

“For the past seventeen years there is one thing which in my opinion we haven’t done well. Out of concern for state security and in view of the lessons of Stalin in the Soviet Union, we set up a first and second line [of officials]. I have been in the second line, other comrades in the first line. Now we can see that wasn’t so good; as a result our forces were dispersed. When we entered the cities we could not centralize our efforts, and there were quite a few independent kingdoms. Hence the Eleventh Plenum carried out changes. This is one matter. I am in the second line, I do not take charge of day-to-day work. Many things are left to other people so that other people’s prestige is built up, and when I go to see God there won’t be such a big upheaval in the State. Everybody was in agreement with this idea of mine. It seems that there are some things which the comrades in the first line have not managed too well. There are some things I should have kept a grip on which I did not. So I am responsible, we cannot just blame them.”

—Talk at the Central Work Conference, (Oct. 25, 1966), CMTTP, p. 270.

“I spoke to Comrade Lin Biao and some of the things he said were not very accurate. For example he said that a genius only appears in the world once in a few centuries and in China once in a few millennia. This just doesn’t fit the facts. Marx and Engels were contemporaries, and not one century had elapsed before we had Lenin and Stalin, so how could you say that a genius only appears once in a few centuries?”

—Summary of Chairman Mao’s Talks with Responsible Comrades at Various Places during his Provincial Tour, (Middle of Aug. to Sept. 12, 1971), CMTTP, p. 294. On the page before that, Mao denied that he was a genius and defined it as follows: “To be a genius is to be a bit more intelligent. But genius does not depend on one person or a few people. It depends on a party, the party which is the vanguard of the proletariat. Genius is dependent on the mass line, on collective wisdom.” Given that Mao also said that Stalin did not use the mass line, it is not clear what basis he had for implying that Stalin was a genius. —Ed.

## **Part II: A Summary of Mao’s Criticisms of Stalin by Topic**

The task now is to sum up Mao’s criticisms of Stalin in all the above comments. It should first be recognized that there are clearly some important changes of viewpoint over time, and even some outright inconsistencies if the changes of views over time are not allowed for.

Moreover, a few early statements by Mao sound almost religious in their devotion, such as that “Stalin is the savior of all the oppressed” and “Comrade Stalin is the leader of the world

revolution. This is an extremely important circumstance. Among the whole human race, this man, Stalin, has appeared, and this is a very great event. Because he is there, it is easier to get things done. As you know, Marx is dead, and Engels and Lenin too are dead. If there were no Stalin, who would give the orders?" [Both quotes are from Mao's "Speech at a Meeting of All Circles in Yan'an to Commemorate Stalin's Sixtieth Birthday" (Dec. 21, 1939)] Was this sort of grossly excessive praise and obeisance toward Stalin necessary in the international communist movement at that time? If so, this is in itself a very strong implicit criticism of Stalin. At any rate, by 1957 Mao was saying that Stalin's "personality cult was metaphysics; no one was permitted to criticize him." ["Speech at the Congress of Communist Parties and Workers' Parties in Socialist Countries" (Nov. 18, 1957)] That's quite a different point of view!

Nevertheless, despite some changes in views over the years—mostly, it seems, in a considerably more critical direction—there is still a more or less unified general critical evaluation of Stalin that Mao presents in most of these collected comments. These, we feel, are the main themes:

- While Stalin kept to a materialist stance in philosophy, his understanding and application of dialectics was much more uneven. He failed to recognize the centrality of the concept of contradiction in dialectics, and often failed to recognize the existence of important social and class contradictions.
- Specifically, Stalin failed to understand that even after the collectivization of agriculture class contradictions still existed in the countryside, and class struggle would continue there.
- And more generally, Stalin failed to recognize that even after the basic construction of socialism in the USSR, class struggle still continued, and the contradiction between the socialist and capitalist roads still continued—not only in society generally, but also within the Communist Party.
- Because of this lack of appreciation of the continuation of class struggle in socialist society, Stalin tended to reduce the threat of capitalist restoration within the USSR to just the possibility of armed attack by foreign imperialism (though that was indeed a legitimate and serious worry).
- Within the USSR, Stalin had a "paternalistic" approach toward the masses, and sought to change and run society for them, instead of using the mass line method of mobilizing the masses to change and run society for themselves. Stalin did not use the mass line either in politics or in economic work.
- Specific examples: Stalin failed to rely on the masses in suppressing counter-revolutionaries and enemy agents, instead relying almost entirely on the security agencies to do this. Similarly, Stalin failed to rely on the masses to ward off the danger of a general capitalist restoration. Even in economic work he tended in later years to rely more on cadres and technology than on the masses.
- Stalin confused contradictions among the people with the contradictions between the people and the enemy. Specifically, he unjustly imprisoned or executed a great many people.
- Within the Soviet Union, the CPSU and the International Communist Movement, Stalin insisted on complete obedience from everyone, and would brook no criticisms from anyone. He was suspicious and mistrustful of those whose complete obedience and total agreement he questioned.

- In his relations with other countries, including China, Stalin often acted as a “great nation chauvinist”, and even at times like an imperialist might act.
- Stalin promoted the construction of an inappropriate and metaphysical personality cult around himself as an individual. [This criticism is unfortunately somewhat ironic, given that Mao later did this as well!]
- In economics, Stalin seriously neglected agriculture and light industry, and put lopsided emphasis on heavy industry.
- Similarly, Stalin gave insufficient attention to raising the living standards of the masses (especially the peasants).
- Stalin seemed to be at a loss as to how to transform cooperative production in agriculture into state production, and how to transform the peasantry into agricultural workers.
- More generally, after the early transformations of industry and agriculture, Stalin seemed to resign himself to the continuation of the existing relations of production and did not try to further transform them in the direction of communism.
- Stalin did not show sufficient vigilance in the period before the German attack on the Soviet Union, and grossly miscalculated as to when that attack might occur. Nevertheless he did successfully lead the Soviet Union and the world in defeating Hitler.
- On the other hand, Stalin tended to be too frightened of the imperialist powers, way too cautious, and even attempted to prevent revolutions in other countries because he feared they might lead to the involvement of the USSR in a war. At several key points, he even tried to prevent the Chinese Revolution from proceeding.
- Stalin did not do a good job in training and preparing his successors. (This, alas, also turned out to be true of Mao.)

If Mao had all these (and more) serious criticisms of Stalin, then why did he regularly repeat his “70% good, 30% bad” overall evaluation of the man? There seems to be two reasons: First, Stalin really did have some important positive aspects and really had led the Soviet Union to a number of important advances and victories. Among these were the massive and extremely rapid industrialization of the country; the completion of the socialization of industry; the collectivization of agriculture (though this was done in a very brutal way); and the victory over the horrendous attack by Nazi Germany (despite his lack of vigilance ahead of the German attack).

Secondly, Mao felt that while Stalin should in fact be criticized for his errors, that it was wrong to “knock him off in one blow”. What exactly was he getting at here? Mao evidently felt that after such a long period of undiluted praise and glorification of Stalin and the Soviet Union while he was in charge, the sudden total denunciation of him and the exposure all at once of the many major problems, mistakes and even crimes during the Stalin period, would all lead to tremendous disorientation on the part of many communists and their supporters around the world. And this is in fact what happened. Many western parties, as Mao later noted, lost huge numbers of members and much of their influence in the aftermath of Khrushchev’s not-really-so-secret total denunciation of Stalin.

Mao tended to emphasize praise and support for Stalin in his public statements, though he did openly acknowledge that Stalin had made some serious errors. This may have been so that people would have time to reorient themselves about the Stalin era and not lose heart because of

Khrushchev's revelations. It was probably also due in part to the growing need to reaffirm Marxist principles and traditions in opposition to Khrushchev's ever-more-evident revisionism. On the other hand, at meetings with leading Party cadres, Mao's remarks tended to focus more on a variety of specific criticisms of Stalin, in philosophy, in political economy, with regard to Stalin's political leadership and his leadership of the international communist movement, and with regard to his attitude and behavior toward the Chinese revolution. While Mao still often repeated that Stalin should be upheld in the main, in these more private meetings most of his comments about Stalin were quite critical, and seem to have become more critical as time went on, partly in light of the unfolding experience of the Chinese revolution.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietpolitics/angeratstalin>

## **What was the split between China and the Soviet Union about?**

The Marxists Internet Archive [has a page](#) on this very subject, [explaining the particulars](#). Quotes from the page are needed to explain more:

The term "Sino-Soviet Split" refers to the gradual worsening of relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, and between their respective Communist Parties. While discomfiture between them had long roots, reaching back to civil wars in China prior to the establishment of the People's Republic, the disagreements gained momentum in the decades after China's liberation and would eventually lead to the Soviets referring to the Chinese as "splittists", "left-wing adventurists", "anti-Marxist" enemies of Socialism "in league with Imperialism", while the Chinese came to regard the Soviets as "revisionists" and "social-imperialists", or "socialist in words, imperialists in deeds", and as "the principal danger in the world today." Graduating from words to deeds, the conflict was expanded from an ideological one between two political parties to a conflict between nation states as relations between the USSR and the PRC were severed and, in 1969, their troops clashed across their common border. Though various authors place emphases differently, its pretty generally agreed that the main issues separating the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) revolved around the questions of evaluation of Stalin, "Peaceful Coexistence", "Peaceful Transition to Socialism", and War and Imperialism. Briefly:

1. On Stalin: The CPC objected to the CPSU de-Stalinization campaign, arguing that the general line of the International Communist Movement (ICM) had been correct during Stalin's tenure, that he was not just a Russian or Soviet leader, but a leader of world stature with a world-wide legacy which could not be swept aside by the CPSU leadership, and that overall, his successes outweighed his failings.
2. On War: Whereas the CPSU recognized the power of the imperialist coalition arrayed against the socialist bloc and saw disastrous consequences for the world as a whole from nuclear war, the CPC tended to disparage the imperialists, a sentiment echoes in Mao's famous aphorism that "Imperialists are paper tigers", and instead spoke of turning world war into revolutionary war.

3. On Peaceful Coexistence: Deriving from its views on the dangers of nuclear war, the CPSU saw coexistence with the West as in the mutual interest of both systems. The Chinese saw this as capitulation.
4. Peaceful Transition: The CPSU and its allied parties advocated using democratic and peaceful means to advance the struggles of the working class and toward winning state power wherever those means were available. The CPC, on the other hand, disparaged such methods and proposed that the need for revolutionary war in order to seize power was a universal law of class struggle.

The conflict wound down after the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Cultural Revolution in China. In the 1980s, relations between the two countries were normalized, and any remaining conflicts were more or less rendered moot by the dissolution of the USSR. Nonetheless, thanks in part to the Chinese flooding the world with pamphlets outlining their views, and mainly to the importance of the two countries and the issues they brought up, for a large portion of the latter half of the Twentieth Century whether one was "Pekingese" or "Muscovite" was pretty much the question for the world's non-Trotskyist Left.

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In 1956, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev delivered a report criticizing Stalin. This report caused quite a stir internationally when its text was released. The CPC quickly expressed its disagreement with Khrushchev's report. As part of these exchanges, the CPC published "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (April, 1956) and "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (December, 1956), seeking to refute several points made in Khrushchev's report.

In this context of growing dissent, a series of meetings of the world's Communist Parties were staged. The two principal such meetings were those held in Moscow in 1957 and 1960. Though ostensibly to build the unity of the Communist Movement, they were dominated by the widening rift between the CPSU and the CPC, and at each both sides fought to have their views incorporated into the final documents. Although China could count on the unqualified support of only the Albanian delegation, it reportedly managed to have some important amendments included in the documents issued from the conferences. The documents of those meetings were among the last efforts made to compromise on several major issues between the two parties and themselves became reference points in the polemic that followed.

...

Up to this time the CPC and the CPSU took care to not criticize each other openly by name, instead referring obliquely to "revisionists" (from the Chinese side), or to "splittists" (from the Soviet side), in the International Communist Movement (ICM), or using the issue of Titoism and Yugoslavia as a stand-in for the larger issue of conduction of the ICM. Nonetheless, tensions were often high. In June 1960, Chinese officials -including Zhou Enlai- had pointedly criticized Soviet policies in front of the Soviet delegates (some would say "attacked" the Soviet delegation). The Soviets attempted to bring the CPC to heel by suspending distribution of Chinese periodicals in the USSR, and in July of that year, all Soviet technical assistants -some

3,000 in all- were withdrawn from China. Nonetheless, later in 1960 things were still cool enough that the CPC could proclaim "Eternal, Unbreakable Sino-Soviet Friendship" (Peking Review, No. 49/50 of 1960).

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In June of 1963 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in response to its letter of March 30, 1963. In it, the CPC took the offensive and, reasserting that "revisionism" was the main danger within the socialist camp, spelled out its differences with the leadership of the CPSU and made a number of proposals. The Chinese quickly translated it into several languages and published it, along with the texts of the CPSU letters of February 21 and March 30, 1963, and the CPC letter of March 9, 1963, as A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement.

...

The CPSU responded to the publication of the CPC's Proposal by publishing an Open Letter detailing its position on the matter and holding the CPC responsible for the divisions in the ICM. Having made its point, the CPSU followed by proposing -e.g. in a letter to the CPC, dated November 29, 1963- that the polemic be taken out of public view, as well as advancing a set of counterproposals which, it claimed, would "normalize" relations.

In sum, the split started after Khrushchev's "secret speech" denouncing Stalin and expanded from there as the Soviet Union had the "rightist" Khrushchev in charge. Relevant here are [Mao's evaluations of Stalin](#). Also see [this page](#) and [this page](#) which has scanned issues of the Peking Review.

## The view from the anti-revisionist side of the fence

Some of these sources come from [here](#)

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<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietpolitics/sinosovietsplit>

## What is anti-revisionism?

This may seem like a foreign concept to some but it is actually pretty easy to understand. As the Sino-Soviet split [exacerbated differences](#) among revolutionaries [across the world](#), many moved to protect the legacy of Stalin and against reforms that diluted communism. One page on the Marxist Internet Archive, by a "Paul C." [helps to define the term](#) more in-depth and how its usage has changed

Historically, in the Communist lexicon, the term “anti-revisionism” has been used to describe opposition to attempts to revise, modify or abandon the fundamentals of revolutionary theory and practice in a manner that was perceived to represent concessions to Communism’s adversaries.

In recent times, however, the term has taken on a more specific meaning. It describes a trend that developed in the pro-Soviet (as opposed to the Trotskyist) Communist movement after World War II. The growth of this anti-revisionist trend was particularly noticeable at several critical moments in the history of the Communist movement – the shift from WW II-era collaboration between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers to the Cold War, and the crisis inaugurated by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

Initially, the anti-revisionists presented a critique of the official Communist Parties “from the left” for having abandoned orthodox Marxism-Leninism (becoming “revisionist,”), and for being insufficiently revolutionary. Once the official Communist Parties joined in Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin, the defense of Stalin and his legacy became a hallmark of “anti-

revisionism.” Later on, the anti-revisionist movement expanded and diversified to encompass those communists who rejected a pro-Soviet orientation for one aligned either with Chinese or Albanian positions.

Anti-revisionism enjoyed its moment of greatest size and influence with numerous “Marxist-Leninist” and “Maoist” parties, groups and publications springing up around the world in the period which began with the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s. Its growth was greatly accelerated by international enthusiasm for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, but it began to decline in response to controversial Chinese foreign policy decisions in the last years of Mao’s life, his death and the subsequent defeat of the Gang of Four. While some anti-revisionists soldiered on, adapting to these changes, these later events spurred other elements to argue for a non-Trotskyist “left-wing” communism, independent of allegiance to foreign authorities or models.

Wikipedia [says](#) that historically, the anti-revisionist groups included the Party of Labour of Albania, Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership and the Communist Party of China under Mao's leadership. Wikipedia lists the following parties as, at the current time, having an anti-revisionist position:

- Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan
- Communist Party of Albania
- Revolutionary Communist Party of Argentina
- Communist Party of Benin
- Bhutan Communist Party (Marxist–Leninist–Maoist)
- Revolutionary Communist Party (Brazil)
- Voltaic Revolutionary Communist Party (Burkina Faso)
- Communist Party of Burma
- Communist Party of Canada (Marxist–Leninist)
- Chilean Communist Party (Proletarian Action)
- Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist–Leninist)
- Revolutionary Communist Party of Côte d'Ivoire
- Workers' Communist Party (Denmark)
- Communist Party of Labour (Dominican Republic)
- Marxist–Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador
- Workers' Communist Party of France
- New Communist Party of Georgia
- Communist Party of Germany (Roter Morgen)
- Marxist–Leninist Party of Germany
- German Communist Party
- Movement for the Reorganization of the Communist Party of Greece 1918–1955
- Marxist–Leninist Communist Party of Greece
- Communist Party of Greece (Marxist–Leninist)
- Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist)
- Communist Party of India (Maoist)
- Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas
- Labour Party of Iran

- Communist Platform (Italy)
- Workers' Party of Korea
- Communist Party of Mexico (Marxist–Leninist)
- Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
- Marxist–Leninist Group Revolution (Norway)
- Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party (Pakistan)
- Communist Party of the Philippines
- VKPB (Russia)
- Russian Maoist Party
- Communist Party of Spain (Marxist–Leninist)
- Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain
- Communist Party (Sweden)
- Tunisian Workers' Communist Party
- Marxist–Leninist Communist Party (Turkey)
- Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist–Leninist
- Communist Party of Britain (Marxist–Leninist)
- Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist–Leninist)
- Stalin Society (UK)
- Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist–Leninist)
- New Communist Party of Britain
- American Party of Labor (United States)
- Communist Voice Organization (United States)
- Freedom Road Socialist Organization (United States)
- Progressive Labor Party (United States)
- Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (United States)
- U.S. Marxist–Leninist Organization (United States)
- Workers Party, USA
- Marxist–Leninist Communist Party of Venezuela

More about this has been discussed [here](#) in relation to the USSR, with documents provided.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietpolitics/antirevisionism>

## Khrushchev and capitalism

- Joseph Ball, [The Need for Planning: The Restoration of Capitalism in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and the Decline of the Soviet Economy](#). Here is an [explanation](#) of the article and his [defense of the article](#)
- Grover Furr, [Khrushchev Lied: The Evidence That Every "Revelation" of Stalin's \(and Beria's\) Crimes in Nikita Khrushchev's Infamous "Secret Speech" to the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 25, 1956, is Provably False](#)
- Ludo Martens, [Another View of Stalin](#)
- [Numerous leftists who say that Khrushchev began the restoration of capitalism](#)

For more, see especially the anti-revisionist arguments [here](#).



<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/khrushchevcapitalism>

There are numerous leftists who have argued, apart [from Stephen Gowans](#), that the [restoration of capitalism](#) in the Soviet Union began under Nikita Khrushchev, who became the premier after Joseph Stalin died in 1953.

Here are quotes to that effect:

- "Many people, sadly even many parties, up to today attribute the origins of the process of capitalist restoration in the USSR to the Gorbachev years alone, that is, the period from March 1985 to August 1991...the rot, the downhill process along the road that led to the restoration of capitalism, began with the triumph of Khrushchevite revisionism at the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU in 1956...the Khrushchevites instituted economic reforms which led to the most destructive consequences. The profit motive became the regulator of production under these reforms and, in time, these reforms led to the growth of private enterprise...Through the 'economic reforms', the Khrushchevite revisionists created the conditions for the growth of the second economy, which in turn undermined the socialist economy."- [Halpar Brar](#)
- "From that point onward [1953, after Stalin's death], the aim of production was for profit. This is what we mean by the restoration of capitalism...when the capitalist-roaders came to power in 1953, they began to export capital (commodities, credits, loans, etc.) in the form of foreign "aid" to the colonies and semi-colonies of the world imperialist system; again, a complete reversal from the practice and policies under Stalin...By the time of the 20th Party Congress in 1956, the capitalist-roaders were in firm command of the Party and state...the period from 1956-61...the rule of the revisionist clique, based among a privileged stratum, was transformed into the rule of a bourgeois class of a new type, and when the means of production they controlled were transformed into capital and, consequently, the working class into wage-laborers."- [League for Proletarian Revolution](#)
- "The reactionary process of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union that commenced, right after the death-murder of Joseph Stalin, with the overthrow of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat from the renegade social-democratic clique of Khrushchev-Brezhnev, was a very complicated development based on the capitalist economic reforms and a series of inter-connected measures which had as a central and only goal: the total elimination of socialism-communism and the complete re-establishment of the exploitive capitalist system...the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union did not only bring about the emergence of all the characteristic features of capitalism in the country's economy but it paved the way for a prolonged economic stagnation, especially during the Brezhnev period, and led the whole society to an unprecedented bourgeois degeneration and in a deep and all-sided crisis that included all the known scourges of the old decadent, rotten and superseded bourgeois society"- [Movement for the Reorganization of the CP of Greece 1918-1955](#)
- "...the basis of this [Soviet] economy changed radically after the death of Stalin in 1953. In short, within the span of a few years, a dynamic, socialist system was replaced with a stagnant capitalist system. It was this capitalist system that suffered slow-down and final dissolution in 1991. According to a major tendency in Marxism, the leaders who came after Stalin were revisionists. This tendency holds that these leaders wished to revise

Marxism by mixing it with capitalist ideology. The economic analysis given below provides evidence to support the anti-revisionist line. To put it another way, the form of the Soviet system may have remained socialist, after 1953, in the sense that there was state-ownership and the semblance of central allocation of the means of production. However, changes introduced following Stalin's death meant that the means of production became commodities. After 1953, what was being "planned" was in fact capitalist commodity production. Therefore in essence the system after 1953 was capitalist, not socialist...after 1953, the means of production in the Soviet Union were sold at their prices of production, like capitalist commodities. This was in opposition to Stalin's line."- [Joesph Ball](#)

- "It is true that an historical turn started when the Khrushchev group took the reins of state in their hands, but this was a big retrogressive turn, a turn that flung the doors open to opportunism and revisionism, to treachery and degeneration, to the undermining of unity and beginning the rift in the communist movement, to approaches to and unity with the imperialists and other enemies of peoples and of socialism, towards sabotage of the revolution and restoration of capitalism...the Khrushchev group are turning the glorious Communist Party of the Soviet Union into a revisionist party and the Soviet socialist state into a dictatorship of the Khrushchevite clique. Their theses on the so-called <<party of the whole people>> and the state of the whole people are a great fraud. They have nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism and serve only to pave the way to the restoration of capitalism...We do not want to see the revisionists wreck the achievements of the October Revolution and push the country towards alliance with the imperialists for the restoration of capitalism over the soil watered with the blood of the best sons of the party, of the working class, of the Soviet people. We want to see the Soviet Union, yesterday, today, tomorrow, and always, a powerful bastion of the cause of socialism and communism, of the Revolution and the freedom of people's, of peace in the world."- [Central Committee of Albania Party of Labor](#)

There is also evidence that Khrushchev's communism was [phoney](#), [liberalism was re-introduced](#), and that the "[reactionary process of capitalist restoration](#) in the Soviet Union that commenced, right after the death-murder of Joseph Stalin." There is also a [book](#) by Martin Nicolaus titled "[Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR](#) " in [varied forms](#). Also see [this essay](#). The renouncing of Stalin culminated in Khrushchev's traitorous "[secret speech](#)" in 1956 while some say this is [just revisionism](#) and nothing more.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/khrushchevrevisionism>

## Russian viewpoints on Soviet History post-1991

This page focuses on viewpoints of Russians after 1991 on the Soviet Union. While it is not a theoretical analysis, it does say that the efforts of capitalists to impose their viewpoints is not as successful as they would want. Clearly, anti-communist propaganda is faltering in the Russian Federation today and has for years, even with its right-leaning, capitalistic political party, United Russia, currently in power.



2017

[Poll 1:](#)

- 44% said "Russia needs to learn more about the period [1917], in order to avoid repeating its mistakes"
- 48% said October Revolution was inevitable, the top answers for why the revolution happened is government weakness and the plight of the workers
- many question if the Bolsheviks legally came to power but many see the revolution as positive
- most say the revolution "opened a new era in the history of the peoples of Russia" or "spurred their social and economic development."
- Russians also said that after 1917, half said that "Russia continued to develop in keeping with its own traditions and national values," the overthrow of autocracy was positive, and that without a revolution "the Romanov monarchy would have been restored" or some "other extremists, opportunists would have seized power and caused even more damage for the people."
- Russians also showed their approval for Stalin and Lenin, some dislike of Stalin
- many saying they would "attempt to survive, without taking part in events"
- while others said they would like to be living under Putin or Brezhnev, and few saying the events of 1917 can happen in Russia today.

[Poll 2:](#)

- Must Russians see either Prehistoric times, time immemorial or Kievan Rus as the beginning of Russian history
- Many Russians find the WWII, the Great Patriotic War, an interesting period of Soviet history

[Poll 3](#)

- Russians say the top reasons for the USSR's end are: (1) "Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and Shushkevich's irresponsible and unjustified Belovezha "conspiracy""; (2) "A conspiracy between foreign powers hostile to the USSR"; and (3) "The people's dissatisfaction with the country's leadership, M. Gorbachev and his associates"
- 56% of Russians say that they are sad the USSR fell, a trend in opinion that has continued since 2014.
- Those who are sad the USSR are sad because: (1) "Destruction of the single economic system" (2) "People lost the feeling of belonging to a great power"; (3) "Mutual distrust and cruelty have increased"; (4) "The feeling that you are at home in any part of the USSR was lost"; (5) "Connection with friends, relatives lost"; and 6) "It's more difficult to now to travel, vacation freely"
- Most Russians feel the end of the USSR could have been avoided
- 12% of Russians want "Resurrection of the USSR in its former form"

[Poll 4:](#)

- Russians believe a great power consists of: "High level of citizens' standard of living"; "Economic and industrial potential of the country"; and "Military might, possession of nuclear missiles" with other reasons piling in comparison
- 11% of Russians want "A socialist government with communist ideology"

#### [Poll 5:](#)

- While Russians are divided about the fall of the monarchy, 45% believe that "The February Revolution of 1917 was itself meaningless and was only the first preliminary step towards the October Revolution"
- 39% believe that "The February Revolution was a stepping stone towards the Great October Socialist Revolution, which created the world's first government of workers and farmers"
- Almost as many said that life was "best" under Brezhnev (29%) as under Putin (32%)

2016

#### [Poll 1](#)

- If you add up all of the views ("Whatever flaws and failures are attributed to Stalin, the most important thing is that, under his leadership, Russia was victorious in World War II", "Stalin was a wise leader who led the USSR to greatness and prosperity", "Only a stern leader could have maintained order in the government given the class struggle, external threats, and lack of discipline in Russia 50-70 years ago", "The Russian people can't do without leaders like Stalin; sooner or later, one will come and establish order", "Stalin continued what had been begun by Lenin and other Bolshevik revolutionaries", "Those who vilify Stalin do not understand the interests of the Russian people and government" many more Russians have positive views of Stalin, than have negative views ("Stalin was a cruel, inhuman tyrant, guilty of the murder of millions of innocent people", "Stalin's policies (purging the military, his deal with Hitler) left the country unprepared for war in 1941 and led to devastating losses", "We still don't know the truth about Stalin and his actions", "Stalin distorted Lenin's ideas and created something far from the ideals of true socialism"). The total percentage, if readjusted for 100% means that approximately 71.5% of Russians have positive views of Stalin, while less than 28% have negative views.
- 45% of Russians believe that "Equal parts good and bad" in the "Stalinist" period, while 29% of people believe it was overall positive, with only 16% feeling that Stalin did "bad"

#### [Poll 2](#), with some questions asked in 2015:

- While 37% of Russians are neutral, the same amount disapprove of Yeltsin, more than the 14% who approve
- While 29% of Russians feel positively toward the 1990 declaration of independence, 34% think it was a negative
- While 25% of Russians liked Yeltsin winning in 1991, 47% see it as a negative, with the same negative feelings about his victory in 1996

- Most Russians think that "Yeltsin resigned due to illness and inability to fulfill his duties as president of Russia" or that "Yeltsin resigned due to overwhelming political criticism"
- Broad disapproval of Russia during the Yeltsin era
- Broad disapproval of the Gaidar Reforms of 1992
- Negative viewpoints toward the dissolving of the Supreme Soviet of Russia in 1993
- 64% have a negative view of the dissolution of the USSR in 1991
- 54% regret the end of the USSR and 51% say it could have been avoided

#### Poll 3:

- 61% say WWII was unavoidable with less saying war could have been avoided
- 52% say that Germany's attack on the USSR was unexpected while only 38% say that the idea that the attack was "unexpected was fabricated to cover up Stalin's political blunders"
- 85% say that their Russian ancestors fought in WWII
- 68% said that their Russian ancestors who fought were killed
- 51% said that the "Soviet people" should be given credit for the USSR's victory, and 33% saying "everyone" with only 9% saying Stalin
- The most number of Russians, above those who dislike Stalin or the Communist Party, say that "No one except our enemy" is the reason for massive losses in the war
- Many Russians believe that Soviets served in Vlasov's Army due to a "desire to avoid death in P.O.W. camps"
- 34% say that "The free will of the people" in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia was the reason for their addition to the USSR in 1940, while 30% said there was Soviet pressure
- 39% of Russians believed that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was a loss, while only 14% praised it

#### Poll 4:

- 37% of Russians have either sympathy, admiration, or respect for Stalin, while only 17% are seething in anger
- 54% of Russians believe that Stalin played a positive role in Russian history
- While many say that "Stalin was a Cruel, Inhuman Tyrant, Guilty of the Deaths of Millions of Innocent People," a ringer thrown in by the questioners who clearly disdain Stalin, labeling those who don't believe this "Respondents who deny Stalin's guilt in the death of millions," 57% believe that Stalin brought greatness and prosperity to the USSR, with 28% believing he was a "great leader"
- While many wouldn't have wanted to live or work under Stalin, 71% said that under the leadership of Stalin, even with his faults, the Soviets were "victorious in World War II"
- Many Russians believe that the Russian people could have lived without Stalin, and while 45% are outraged at the "purges" (which is the lowest polling ever), 26% believe it was a "political necessity and historically justified"
- With Russians divided on Khrushchev's traitorous anti-Stalin speech in 1956 and 34% saying that Russia is free of "Stalinism" (not a real concept), opinions are divided on Stalin when it comes to Ukraine, with more negativity there.

2015

Poll 1:

- 46% of Russians think positively about Lenin, more than the negative responses, with only 17% seeing Trotsky positively and 37% negatively
- For the Brezhnev era, people say: (1) "At first, it was a period of positive development, but it then turned into a period of stagnation, which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union"; (2) "It was a period of positive development for the country"; (3) "That era brought serious problems to the country, but the collapse of the Soviet Union was brought about by Gorbachev and the "democrats""; (4) "It was a period of stagnation that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union"
- 51% say that Stalin had a positive role in everyday life of Russia
- Very negative opinions of Yeltsin

Poll 2:

- Positive feelings toward erection of a Stalin monument
- Admiration, sympathy, and respect for Stalin
- While 46% of the people's personal association with Stalin is "the end of terror and mass repression, freeing millions of innocent people from jail" (lower than in previous years), 25% see his death as "the loss of a great leader and teacher," yet 59% of the people did NOT suffer from "repression" during Stalin's time
- 40% believe the sacrifices in Stalin's time were justified and 57% do NOT see him as a state criminal
- 69% are against the city of Volgograd changing back to Stalingrad, while 31% are for it

Poll 3:

- 31% of Russians believe that "The memory of Lenin will be preserved in history, but nobody will follow his ways anymore"
- 21% believe that "Lenin's ideas have been distorted by his followers," along with other negative opinions
- 35% believe that "Lenin tried to rely on the best thoughts and hopes of people in order to lead them to a brighter future" or that "Lenin brought our country to the path of progress and justice"

Poll 4

- 85% of Russians believe the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a "criminal and inhuman act"
- 25% of Russians believe nuclear weapons can be a "deterrent for the most aggressive forces in the world: the fear of mutually assured destruction encourages peaceful conflict resolution," showing that there is still relevance to this idea today, especially when it comes to the DPRK, this belief is even held as 33% of Russians believe that nuclear weapons are a "constant threat to all people and life on Earth" and 24% see it as "a

constant danger and concern that nuclear weapons will fall into the hands of political maniacs or terrorists."

2014

#### Poll 1:

- 62% of Russians believe that Russia needs a democracy, with 16% believing that Russia needs a democracy that is "the same as it was in the Soviet Union," showing some yearning for Soviet Democracy.

1990s

- [Victor Anpilov, communist who resisted counterrevolution in USSR](#)

Other polls

- [Poll: Russians say Aug 1991 events are tragedy, not triumph of democracy](#)
- [Former Soviet Countries See More Harm From Breakup](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/opinionsafterussr>

## **Views on Soviet Union post-1991**

Varied books and articles

- Austin Murphy, [The Triumph of Evil: The Reality of the USA's Cold War Victory](#), 2000.
- [Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism](#), 2001.
- [Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union](#), 2004.
- [Social Democracy, Soviet Socialism and the Bottom 99 Percent by Stephen Gowans](#), 2011.
- [An experiment in living socialism: Bulgaria then and now](#), 2014.
- [Red flags on Red Square: celebrating the Russian Revolution](#), 2014.
- [The return of Stalingrad?](#), 2014.

Hail The Reds

- Stephen Gowans, [Hail the Reds](#), 2014

Over the seven decades of its existence, and despite having to spend so much time preparing, fighting, and recovering from wars, the Soviet Union managed to create one of the great achievements of human history: a great industrial society that eliminated most of the inequalities of wealth, income, education and opportunity that plagued what preceded it, what came after it, and what competed with it; a society in which health care and education through university were free (and university students received living stipends); where rent, utilities and public

transportation were subsidized, along with books, periodicals and cultural events; where inflation was eliminated, pensions were generous, and child care was subsidized. By 1933, with the capitalist world deeply mired in a devastating economic crisis, unemployment was declared abolished, and remained so for the next five and a half decades, until socialism, itself, was abolished. The Communists produced social security more robust than provided even by Scandinavian-style social democracy, but achieved with fewer resources and a lower level of development and in spite of the unflagging efforts of the capitalist world to see to it that socialism failed. Soviet socialism was, and remains, a model for humanity -- of what can be achieved outside the confines and contradictions of capitalism. But by the end of the '80s, counterrevolution was sweeping Eastern Europe and Mikhail Gorbachev was dismantling the pillars of Soviet socialism. Naively, blindly, stupidly, some expected Gorbachev's demolition project to lead the way to a prosperous consumer society, in which Soviet citizens, their bank accounts bulging with incomes earned from new jobs landed in a robust market economy, would file into colorful, luxurious shopping malls, to pick clean store shelves bursting with consumer goods. Others imagined a new era of a flowering multiparty democracy and expanded civil liberties, coexisting with public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy, a model that seemed to owe more to utopian blueprints than hardheaded reality.

Of course, none of the great promises of the counterrevolution were kept. While at the time the demise of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was proclaimed, not least by leftist intellectuals in the US, as a great victory for humanity, more than a decade later there's little to celebrate. The dismantling of socialism has, in a word, been a catastrophe, a great swindle that has not only delivered none of what it promised, but has wreaked irreparable harm, not only in the former socialist countries, but throughout the Western world, as well. Countless millions have been plunged deep into poverty, imperialism has been given a free hand, and wages and benefits in the West have bowed under the pressure of intensified competition for jobs and industry unleashed by a flood of jobless from the former socialist countries, where joblessness once, rightly, was considered an obscenity. Numberless voices in Russia, Romania, East Germany and elsewhere lament what has been stolen from them -- and from humanity as a whole: "We lived better under communism. We had jobs. We had security." And with the threat of jobs migrating to low-wage, high unemployment countries of Eastern Europe, workers in Western Europe have been forced to accept a longer working day, lower pay, and degraded benefits. Today, they fight a desperate rearguard action, where the victories are few, the defeats many. They too lived better -- once.

But that's only part of the story. For others, for investors and corporations, who've found new markets and opportunities for profitable investment, and can reap the benefits of the lower labor costs that attend intensified competition for jobs, the overthrow of socialism has, indeed, been something to celebrate. Equally, it has been welcomed by the feudal and industrial elite of the pre-socialist regimes whose estates and industrial concerns have been recovered. But they're a minority. Why should the rest of us celebrate our own mugging?

Prior to the dismantling of socialism, most people in the world were protected from the vicissitudes of the global capitalist market by central planning and high tariff barriers. But once socialism fell in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and with China marching resolutely down the capitalist road, the pool of unprotected labor available to transnational corporations expanded

many times over. Today, a world labor force many times larger than the domestic pool of US workers -- and willing to work dirt cheap -- awaits the world's corporations. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out what the implications are for American workers and their counterparts in Germany, Britain and other Western countries: an intense competition of all against all for jobs and industry. Inevitably, incomes fall, benefits are eroded, and working hours extended. Predictably, with labor costs heading south, profits grow fat.

Already, growing competition for jobs and industry is forcing workers in Western Europe to accept less. Workers at Daimler Chrysler, Thomas Cook, and other firms are working longer hours, and in some cases, for less pay and without increases in benefits, to keep jobs from moving to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and other former socialist countries -- which, under the rule of the Reds, used to provide jobs to all. More work for less money is a pleasing outcome for the corporate class, and turns out to be exactly the outcome the fascists of Germany and Italy engineered for their countries' capitalists in the '30s. The methods, to be sure, were different, but the anti-communism of Mussolini's and Hitler's followers, in other hands, has proved just as useful in securing the same retrograde ends. Nobody who has to subject themselves to the vagaries of the labor market -- including workers in the United States -- should be glad communism was abolished.

Maybe some of us don't know we've been mugged. And maybe some of us haven't been. Take the radical American historian Howard Zinn, for example, who, along with most other prominent Left intellectuals, greeted the overthrow of communism with glee [1]. I, no less than others, have admired Zinn's books, articles and activism, though I've come to expect his ardent anti-communism as typical of left US intellectuals. To be sure, in a milieu so hostile to communism, it should come as no surprise that conspicuous displays of anti-communism become a survival strategy for those seeking to establish a rapport, and safeguard their reputations, with a larger (and vehemently anti-communist) audience.

But there may be another reason for the anti-communism of those whose political views leave them open to charges of being soft on communism, and therefore of having horns. As dissidents in their own society, there was always a natural tendency for them to identify with dissidents elsewhere -- and the pro-capitalist, anti-socialist propaganda of the West quite naturally elevated dissidents in socialist countries to the status of heroes, especially those who were jailed, muzzled and otherwise repressed by the State. For these people, the abridgement of civil liberties anywhere looms large, for the abridgement of their own civil liberties would be an event of great personal significance. By comparison, the Red's achievements in providing a comfortable frugality and economic security to all, while recognized intellectually as an achievement of some note, is less apt to stir the imagination of one who has an income, the respect of his peers, and plenty of people to read his books and attend his lectures. He doesn't have to scavenge discarded coal in garbage dumps to eke out a bare, bleak, and unrewarding existence. Some do.

Karol, 14, and his sister Alina, 12, everyday trudge to a dump, where mixed industrial waste is deposited, just outside Swietochlowice, in formerly socialist Poland. There, along with their father, they look for scrap metal and second grade coal, anything to fetch a few dollars to buy a meager supply of groceries. "There was better life in communism," says Karol's father, 49, repeating a refrain heard over and over again, not only in Poland, but also throughout the former

socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. "I was working 25 years for the same company and now I cannot find a job – any job. They only want young and skilled workers." [2] According to Gustav Molnar, a political analyst with the Laszlo Teleki Institute, "the reality is that when foreign firms come here, they're only interested in hiring people under 30. It means half the population is out of the game." [3] That may suit the bottom lines of foreign corporations – and the overthrow of socialism may be a pleasing intellectual outcome for well-fed, comfortable intellectuals from Boston – but it hardly suits that part of the Polish population that must scramble over mountains of industrial waste – or perish. Under socialism "there was always work for everybody." [4] And always a place to live, free schools to go to, and doctors to see, without charge. So why is Howard Zinn glad communism collapsed?

That the overthrow of socialism has failed to deliver anything of benefit to the majority is plain to see. More than a decade after counterrevolution swept through Eastern Europe, 17 former socialist countries are immeasurably poorer. In Russia, poverty has tripled. One child in 10 – three million Russian children – live like animals, ill-fed, dressed in rags, and living, if they're lucky, in dirty, squalid flats. In Moscow alone, 30,000 to 50,000 children sleep in the streets. Life expectancy, education, adult-literacy and income are in decline. A report by the European Children's Trust, written in 2000, revealed that 40 percent of the population of the former socialist countries -- 160 million people – lives in poverty. Infant mortality and tuberculosis are on the rise, approaching Third World levels. The situation, according to the UN, is catastrophic. And everywhere the story is the same. [5, 6, 7, 8]

In Russia, the Kremlin passed a new labor code in 2001 that critics denounced as Dickensian – for good reason. Aimed at creating a climate conducive to profit-making, Soviet-era union guarantees were abolished, maternity leaves shortened, the minimum wage slashed, and the working day lengthened to a "voluntary" 12 hours. [9] "Life was better under the Communists," concludes Aleksandr. "The stores are full of things, but they're very expensive." Victor pines for the "stability of an earlier era of affordable health care, free higher education and housing, and the promise of a comfortable retirement - things now beyond his reach." [10] That Aleksandr and Victor are now free to denounce the new government in the strongest terms, if they wish, hardly seems to be a consolation.

Ion Vancea, a Romanian who struggles to get by on a picayune \$40 per month pension says, "It's true there was not much to buy back then, but now prices are so high we can't afford to buy food as well as pay for electricity." Echoing the words of many in Romania, Vancea adds, "Life was 10 times better under (Romanian Communist Party leader) Ceausescu." [11]

Next door, in Bulgaria, 80 percent are worse off now that the country has transitioned to a market economy. Only five percent say their standard of living has improved. [12] Mimi Vitkova, briefly Bulgaria's health minister for two years in the mid-90s, sums up the decade following the overthrow of socialism: "We were never a rich country, but when we had socialism our children were healthy and well-fed. They all got immunized. Retired people and the disabled were provided for and got free medicine. Our hospitals were free." But things have changed, she says. "Today, if a person has no money, they have no right to be cured. And most people have no money. Our economy was ruined." [13]



In East Germany a new phenomenon has arisen: Ostalgie, a nostalgia based on the old regime's full employment, free health care, free education through university (with living expenses covered by the State), cheap rents, subsidized books and periodicals and dirt cheap public transportation. During the Cold War era, East Germany's relative poverty was attributed to public ownership and central planning – sawdust in the gears of the economic engine, according to anti-socialist mythology. But the propaganda conveniently ignored the fact that the eastern part of Germany had always been less developed than the west, that it had been plundered of its key human assets at the end of World War II by US occupation forces, that the Soviet Union had carted off everything of value to indemnify itself for its war losses, and that East Germany bore the brunt of war reparations to Moscow. [14] On top of that, those who fled East Germany were said to be escaping the repression of a brutal regime, and while some may indeed have been ardent anti-Communists fleeing repression by the State, many were economic refugees, seeking the embrace of a more prosperous West.

Today, nobody of an unprejudiced mind would say that the riches promised East Germans, if only they would restore capitalism, have been realized. Unemployment, once unheard of, runs at 25 percent, rents have skyrocketed, and nobody goes to the doctor unless they can pay. The region's industrial infrastructure – weaker than West Germany's during the Cold War, but expanding -- has now all but disappeared. And the population is dwindling, as economic refugees, following in the footsteps of Cold War refugees before them, make their way westward in search of jobs and opportunity. [15] "We were taught that capitalism was cruel," recalls Ralf Caemmerer, who works for Otis Elevator. "You know, it didn't turn out to be nonsense." [16] As to the claim that East Germans have "freedom" Heinz Kessler, a former East German defense minister replies tartly, "Millions of people in Eastern Europe are now free from employment, free from safe streets, free from health care, free from social security." [17] Still, Howard Zinn is glad communism collapsed. But then, he doesn't live in east Germany.

So, who's doing better? Otto Jelinek, a Czech whose family fled to Canada after the Red Army booted the Nazis out and helped install an antifascist government, became a cabinet minister in Canada's conservative, pro-Reagan Mulroney government in the 80s. Today he lives in Prague, one of "many individuals in positions of high influence, in politics, in business [who] have moved back to the country." [18] What brings Jelenik, and his fellow movers and shakers back? "These people understand that they better than almost anyone help our nation make the transition to a market economy," says the director of the Institute for Contemporary History in Prague, Oldrich Tuma, [19] another way of saying that owing to their connections, they, more than others, know there's a buck to be made and how to make it. And, of course, there's the lure of restitution—getting back property, some of it which can be pressed into service as a rent-bearing asset, they, and their families, used to own. Jelinek didn't recover his old family home. It's an embassy, and hence would have proved to be a spacious, comfortable abode for the Jelinek family in its day, but the Czech government "did return 20 acres of real estate outside of Prague." [20]

Vaclav Havel, the Czech playwright turned President, comes from a prominent, vehemently anti-socialist Prague family. Havel's father was a wealthy real estate tycoon, who developed a number of Prague properties. One was the Lucerna Palace, "a pleasure palace...of arcades, theatres, cinemas, night-clubs, restaurants, and ballrooms," according to Frommer's. It became "a popular

spot for the city's nouveau riche to congregate," including a young Havel, who, raised in the lap of luxury by a governess and chauffeured around town, "spent his earliest years on the Lucerna's polished marble floors." Then, tragedy struck – at least, from Havel's point of view. The Reds expropriated Lucerna and the family's other holdings, and put them to use for the common good, rather than for the purpose of providing the young Havel with more servants. Four decades later, Havel, as president -- and now celebrated throughout the West as a champion of intellectual freedom -- presided over a mass return of nationalized property, including Lucerna and his family's other holdings. As a business investment, Havel's anti-communism proved to be quite profitable. Is he a champion of intellectual freedom, or the formerly pampered scion of an establishment family who had a material stake in seeing socialism overthrown?

The Roman Catholic Church is another winner, which may explain, in part, why the Vatican takes such a dim view of communism. The pro-capitalist Hungarian government has returned to the Roman Catholic Church much of the property nationalized by the Reds, who placed the property under common ownership for the public good. With recovery of many of the Eastern and Central European properties it once owned, the Church is able to reclaim its pre-socialist role of parasite -- raking in vast amounts of unearned wealth in rent, a privilege bestowed for no other reason than it owns title to the land. Hungary also pays the Vatican a US\$9.2 million annuity for property it has been unable to return. [21]

The Church, former landowners, and CEOs aside, most people of the former socialist bloc aren't pleased that the gains of the socialist revolutions have been reversed. Three-quarters of Russians, according to a 1999 poll [22] regret the demise of the Soviet Union. And their assessment of the status quo is refreshingly clear-sighted. Almost 80 percent recognize democracy as a front for a government controlled by the rich. A majority (correctly) identifies the cause of its impoverishment as an unjust economic system (capitalism), which, according to 80 percent, produces "excessive and illegitimate inequalities." [23] The solution, in the view of the majority, is to return to the status quo ante (socialism), even if it means one-party rule. Russians, laments the anti-Communist historian Richard Pipes, haven't Americans' taste for multiparty democracy, and seem incapable of being cured of their fondness for Soviet leaders. In one poll, Russians were asked to list the 10 greatest people of all time, of all nations. Lenin came in second, Stalin fourth (Peter the Great came first.) Pipes seems genuinely distressed they didn't pick his old boss, Ronald Reagan, and is fed up that after years of anti-socialist, pro-capitalist propaganda, Russians remain committed to the idea that private economic activity should be restricted, and "the government [needs] to be more involved in the country's economic life." [24]

So, if the impoverished peoples of the formerly socialist countries pine for the former attractions of socialism, why don't they vote the Reds back in? In some countries, reconstituted Communist parties have received popular mandates to govern. And in Russia, Unity and Fatherland, the party that has become the parliamentary extension of the president, Vladimir Putin, has tapped into a deep well of nostalgia for Soviet socialism. "They've managed to create a new party of power, which in fact is replacing the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," says Boris Kagarlitsky, director of the Moscow-based Institute of Globalization Studies. "It functions like the old Communist Party; it looks like the old Communist Party; it behaves like the old Communist Party." [25]

But socialism can't be turned on with the flick of a switch (not that the Unity and Fatherland party would, if it could.) The former socialist economies have been mostly privatized and placed under the control of the market. Those who accept the goals and values of capitalism have been recruited to occupy pivotal offices of the State. And economic, legal and political structures have been altered, to accommodate private production for profit. True, there are openings for communist parties to operate within the new multiparty democracy, but the pillars of socialism – public ownership, central planning, and the lead role of the working class – have been dismantled and carted away, tossed, we're told, into the dustbin of history. Getting them back will take something more than returning Reds to parliament.

Of course, no forward step will be taken, can be taken, until a decisive part of the population becomes disgusted with and rejects what exists today, and is convinced something better is possible and is willing to tolerate the upheavals of transition. That something better is indeed possible – not a utopia, but something better than unceasing economic insecurity, private (and for many, unaffordable) health care and education, and vast inequality – is plain. It has been reality in the Soviet Union, in China (for a time), in Eastern Europe, and today, hangs on in Cuba, despite the incessant and far-ranging efforts of the United States to smash it.

It should be no surprise that Vaclav Havel, as others whose economic and political supremacy was, for a time, ended by the Reds, was a tireless fighter against socialism, or that he, and others, who sought to reverse the gains of the revolution, were cracked down on, and sometimes muzzled and jailed by the new regimes. To expect otherwise is to turn a blind eye to the determined struggle that is carried on by the enemies of socialism, even after socialist forces have seized power. The forces of reaction retain their money, their movable property, the advantages of education, and above all, their international connections. To grant them complete freedom is to grant them a free hand to organize the downfall of socialism, to receive material assistance from abroad to reverse the revolution, and to elevate the market and private ownership once again to the regulating principles of the economy. Few champions of civil liberties argue that in the interests of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press, that Americans ought to be free to replace their republican form of government with a pro-British monarchy, or, more to the point, that Germans ought be allowed to hold pro-Nazi rallies, establish a pro-Nazi press, and organize fascist political parties, to return to the days of the Third Reich. To survive, any socialist government, must, of necessity, be repressive toward its enemies. This is demonized as totalitarianism by those who have an interest in seeing anti-socialist forces prevail, regard civil and political liberties (as against a world of plenty for all) as the summum bonum of human achievement, or have an unrealistically sanguine view of the possibilities for socialist survival.

Where Reds have prevailed, the outcome has been far-reaching material gains for the bulk of the population: full employment, free health care, free education through university, free and subsidized child care, cheap living accommodations and inexpensive public transportation. Life expectancy has soared, illiteracy has been wiped out, and homelessness, unemployment and economic insecurity have been abolished. Racial strife and ethnic tensions has been reduced to almost the vanishing point. And inequalities in wealth, income, opportunity, and education have been greatly reduced. Where Reds have been overthrown, mass unemployment, underdevelopment, hunger, disease, illiteracy, homelessness, and racial conflict have

recrudesced. Communists produced gains in the interest of all humanity, achieved in the face of very trying conditions, including the unceasing hostility of the West and the unremitting efforts of the former exploiters to restore the status quo ante. What they achieved surpassed anything achieved by social democratic struggle in the West, where the advantages of being more advanced industrially, made the promises of socialism all the more readily achievable – and to a far greater degree than could be achieved elsewhere in the world. Hidden, or at best, acknowledged but quickly brushed aside as matters of little significance, these are achievements that have been too long ignored in the West – and greatly missed in the countries where they were reversed in the interests of restoring the wealth and privileges of a minority.

### Democracy, East Germany and the Berlin Wall

- Stephen Gowans, [Democracy, East Germany and the Berlin Wall](#), 2014:

While East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, or GDR) wasn't a 'workers' paradise', it was in many respects a highly attractive model that was responsive to the basic needs of the mass of people and therefore was democratic in the substantive and original sense of the word. It offered generous pensions, guaranteed employment, equality of the sexes and substantial wage equality, free healthcare and education, and a growing array of other free and virtually free goods and services. It was poorer than its West German neighbor, the Federal Republic of Germany, or FRG, but it started at a lower level of economic development and was forced to bear the burden of indemnifying the Soviet Union for the massive losses Germany inflicted upon the USSR in World War II...While the distortions of Cold War history would lead one to believe it was the Soviets who divided Germany, the Western powers were the true authors of Germany's division. The Allies agreed at the February 1945 Yalta conference that while Germany would be partitioned into British, US and Soviet occupation zones, the defeated Germany would be administered jointly....The hope of the Soviets, who had been invaded by Germany in both first and second world wars, was for a united, disarmed and neutral Germany. The Soviet's goals were two-fold: First, Germany would be demilitarized, so that it could not launch a third war of aggression against the Soviet Union. Second, it would pay reparations for the massive damages it inflicted upon the USSR, calculated after the war to exceed \$100 billion...

The United States intended to make post-war life as difficult as possible for the Soviet Union. There were a number of reasons for this, not least to prevent the USSR from becoming a model for other countries. Already, socialism had eliminated the United States' access to markets and spheres of investment in one-sixth of the earth's territory. The US ruling class didn't want the USSR to provide inspiration and material aid to other countries to follow the same path. The lead role of communists in the resistance movements in Europe, "the success of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany," and "the success of the Soviet Union in industrializing and modernizing," had greatly raised the prestige of the USSR and enhanced the popularity of communism. Unless measures were taken to check the USSR's growing popularity, socialism would continue to advance and the area open to US exports and investment would continue to contract. A Germany paying reparations to the Soviets was clearly at odds with the goals of reviving Germany and holding the Soviet Union in check. What's more, while the Soviets wanted Germany to be permanently disarmed as a safeguard against German revanchism, the

United States recognized that a militarized Germany under US domination could play a central role in undermining the USSR.

The division of Germany began in 1946, when the French decided to administer their zone separately. Soon, the Western powers merged their three zones into a single economic unit and announced they would no longer pay reparations to the Soviet Union. The burden would have to be borne by the Soviet occupation zone alone, which was smaller and less industrialized, and therefore less able to offer compensation.

In 1949, the informal division of Germany was formalized with the proclamation by the Western powers of a separate West German state, the FRG. The new state would be based on a constitution written by Washington and imposed on West Germans, without their ratification. (The GDR's constitution, by contrast, was ratified by East Germans.) In 1954, West Germany was integrated into a new anti-Soviet military alliance, NATO, which, in its objectives, aped the earlier anti-Comintern pact of the Axis powers. The goal of the anti-Comintern pact was to oppose the Soviet Union and world communism. NATO, with a militarized West Germany, would take over from where the Axis left off.

The GDR was founded in 1949, only after the Western powers created the FRG. The Soviets had no interest in transforming the Soviet occupation zone into a separate state and complained bitterly about the Western powers' division of Germany. Moscow wanted Germany to remain unified, but demilitarized and neutral and committed to paying war reparations to help the USSR get back on its feet. As late as 1954, the Soviets offered to dissolve the GDR in favour of free elections under international supervision, leading to the creation of a unified, unaligned, Germany. This, however, clashed with the Western powers' plan of evading Germany's responsibility for paying war reparations and of integrating West Germany into the new anti-Soviet, anti-communist military alliance. The proposal was, accordingly, rejected. George Kennan, the architect of the US policy of 'containing' (read undermining) the Soviet Union, remarked: "The trend of our thinking means that we do not want to see Germany reunified at this time, and that there are no conditions on which we would really find such a solution satisfactory."...

The burden of paying war reparations to the Soviets now had to be borne solely by the GDR. And West Germany ceaselessly harassed and sabotaged its neighbor, refusing to recognize it as a sovereign state, regarding it instead as its own territory temporarily under Soviet occupation. Repeatedly, West Germany proclaimed that its official policy was the annexation of its neighbor to the east...

As Pauwels explains,

"During the last weeks of the hostilities the Americans themselves had occupied a considerable part of the Soviet zone, namely Thuringia and much of Saxony. When they pulled out at the end of June, 1945, they brought back to the West more than 10,000 railway cars full of the newest and best equipment, patents, blueprints, and so on from the firm Carl Zeiss in Jena and the local plants of other top enterprises such as Siemens, Telefunken, BMW, Krupp, Junkers, and IG-Farben. This East German war booty included plunder from the Nazi V-2 factory in Nordhausen:

not only the rockets, but also technical documents with an estimated value of 400 to 500 million dollars, as well as approximately 1,200 captured German experts in rocket technology, one of whom being the notorious Wernher von Braun.”

The Allies agreed at Yalta that a post-war Germany would pay the Soviet Union \$10 billion in compensation for the damages inflicted on the USSR during the war. This was a paltry sum compared to the more realistic estimate of \$128 billion arrived at after the war. And yet the Soviets were short changed on even this meagre sum. The USSR received no more than \$5.1 billion from the two German states, most of it from the GDR. The Soviets took \$4.5 billion out of East Germany, carting away whole factories and railways, while the larger and richer FRG paid a miserable \$600 million. The effect was the virtual deindustrialization of the East. In the end, the GDR would compensate both the United States (which suffered virtually no damage in World War II) through the loss of its scientists, technicians, blue-prints, patents and so on, and the Soviet Union (which suffered immense losses and deserved to be compensated), through the loss of its factories and railways. Moreover, the United States offered substantial aid to West Germany to help it rebuild, while the poorer Soviet Union, which had been devastated by the German invasion, lacked the resources to invest in the GDR. The West was rebuilt; the East stripped bare.

...West Germany's comparative wealth offered many advantages in its ideological battle with socialism. For one, the wealth differential could be attributed deceptively to the merits of capitalism versus socialism. East Germany was poorer, it was said, not because it unfairly bore the brunt of indemnifying the Soviets for their war losses, and not because it started on a lower rung, but because public ownership and central planning were inherently inefficient. The truth of the matter, however, was that East German socialism was more efficient than West German capitalism, producing faster growth rates, and was more responsive to the basic needs of its population. “East Germany's national income grew in real terms about two percent faster annually than the West German economy between 1961 and 1989.”

...The counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and China's opening to foreign investment, ushered in a rapid expansion worldwide in the number of people vying for jobs. North American and Western European workers didn't compete for jobs with workers in Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Russia in 1970. They do today.

...No one would have built a Berlin Wall if they didn't have to. But in 1961, with the GDR being drained of its working population by a West Germany that had skipped out on its obligations to indemnify the Soviet Union for the losses the Nazis had inflicted upon it in World War II, there were few options, apart from surrender.

... And while the GDR was poorer than West Germany and many other advanced capitalist countries, its comparative poverty was not the consequence of the country's public ownership and central planning, but of a lower starting point and the burden of having to help the Soviet Union rebuild after the massive devastation Germany inflicted upon it in World War II. Far from being inefficient, public ownership and central planning turned the eastern part of Germany into a rapidly industrializing country which grew faster economically than its West German neighbor and shared the benefits of its growth more evenly. In the East, the economy existed to serve the

people. In the West, the people existed to serve the minority that owned and controlled the economy.

### We Lived Better Then

- Stephen Gowans, [We Lived Better Then](#), 2011:

Over the seven decades of its existence, and despite having to spend so much time preparing, fighting, and recovering from wars, Soviet socialism managed to create one of the great achievements of human history: a mass industrial society that eliminated most of the inequalities of wealth, income, education and opportunity that plagued what preceded it, what came after it, and what competed with it; a society in which health care and education through university were free (and university students received living stipends); where rent, utilities and public transportation were subsidized, along with books, periodicals and cultural events; where inflation was eliminated, pensions were generous, and child care was subsidized. By 1933, with the capitalist world deeply mired in a devastating economic crisis, unemployment was declared abolished, and remained so for the next five and a half decades, until socialism, itself was abolished. Excluding the war years, from 1928, when socialism was introduced, until Mikhail Gorbachev began to take it apart in the late 1980s, the Soviet system of central planning and public ownership produced unfailing economic growth, without the recessions and downturns that plagued the capitalist economies of North America, Japan and Western Europe. And in most of those years, the Soviet and Eastern European economies grew faster.

The Communists produced economic security as robust (and often more so) than that of the richest countries, but with fewer resources and a lower level of development and in spite of the unflagging efforts of the capitalist world to sabotage socialism. Soviet socialism was, and remains, a model for humanity — of what can be achieved outside the confines and contradictions of capitalism. But by the end of the 1980s, counterrevolution was sweeping Eastern Europe and Mikhail Gorbachev was dismantling the pillars of Soviet socialism. Naively, blindly, stupidly, some expected Gorbachev's demolition project to lead the way to a prosperous consumer society, in which Soviet citizens, their bank accounts bulging with incomes earned from new jobs landed in a robust market economy, would file into colorful, luxurious shopping malls, to pick clean store shelves bursting with consumer goods. Others imagined a new era of a flowering multiparty democracy and expanded civil liberties, coexisting with public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy, a model that seemed to owe more to utopian blueprints than hard-headed reality.

Of course, none of the great promises of the counterrevolution were kept. While at the time the demise of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was proclaimed as a great victory for humanity, not least by leftist intellectuals in the United States, two decades later there's little to celebrate. The dismantling of socialism has, in a word, been a catastrophe, a great swindle that has not only delivered none of what it promised, but has wreaked irreparable harm, not only in the former socialist countries, but throughout the Western world, as well. Countless millions have been plunged deep into poverty, imperialism has been given a free hand, and wages and benefits in the West have bowed under the pressure of intensified competition for jobs and industry unleashed by a flood of jobless from the former socialist countries, where joblessness

once, rightly, was considered an obscenity. Numberless voices in Russia, Romania, East Germany and elsewhere lament what has been stolen from them — and from humanity as a whole: “We lived better under communism. We had jobs. We had security.” And with the threat of jobs migrating to low-wage, high unemployment countries of Eastern Europe, workers in Western Europe have been forced to accept a longer working day, lower pay, and degraded benefits. Today, they fight a desperate rearguard action, where the victories are few, the defeats many. They too lived better — once.

...Prior to the dismantling of socialism, most people in the world were protected from the vicissitudes of the global capitalist market by central planning and high tariff barriers. But once socialism fell in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and with China having marched resolutely down the capitalist road, the pool of unprotected labor available to transnational corporations expanded many times over.

...Karol, 14, and his sister Alina, 12, everyday trudge to a dump, where mixed industrial waste is deposited, just outside Swietochlowice, in formerly socialist Poland. There, along with their father, they look for scrap metal and second grade coal, anything to fetch a few dollars to buy a meager supply of groceries. “There was better life in Communism,” says Karol’s father, 49, repeating a refrain heard over and over again, not only in Poland, but also throughout the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. “I was working 25 years for the same company and now I cannot find a job – any job. They only want young and skilled workers.”

For many Russians, life became immeasurably worse.

If you were old, if you were a farmer, if you were a manual worker, the market was a great deal worse than even the relatively stagnant Soviet economy of Brezhnev. The recovery under Putin, such as it was, came almost entirely as a side effect of rising world oil prices, the very process that had operated under Brezhnev. [10]

While the return of capitalism made life harsher for some, it proved lethal for others. From 1991 to 1994, life expectancy in Russia tumbled by five years. By 2008, it had slipped to less than 60 years for Russian men, a full seven years lower than in 1985 when Gorbachev came to power and began to dismantle Soviet socialism. Today “only a little over half of the ex-Communist countries have regained their pretransition life-expectancy levels,” according to a study published in the medical journal, *The Lancet*. [11]

...the propaganda conveniently ignored the fact that the eastern part of Germany had always been less developed than the west, that it had been plundered of its key human assets at the end of World War II by US occupation forces, that the Soviet Union had carted off everything of value to indemnify itself for its war losses, and that East Germany bore the brunt of Germany’s war reparations to Moscow. [19] On top of that, those who fled East Germany were said to be escaping the repression of a brutal regime, and while some may indeed have been ardent anti-Communists fleeing repression by the state, most were economic refugees, seeking the embrace of a more prosperous West, whose riches depended in large measure on a history of slavery,



colonialism, and ongoing imperialism—processes of capital accumulation the Communist countries eschewed and spent precious resources fighting against...

Three-quarters of Russians, according to a 1999 poll [27] regret the demise of the Soviet Union. And their assessment of the status quo is refreshingly clear-sighted. Almost 80 percent recognize liberal democracy as a front for a government controlled by the rich. A majority (correctly) identifies the cause of its impoverishment as an unjust economic system (capitalism), which, according to 80 percent, produces “excessive and illegitimate inequalities.” [28] The solution, in the view of the majority, is to return to socialism, even if it means one-party rule. Russians, laments the anti-Communist historian Richard Pipes, haven’t Americans’ taste for multiparty democracy, and seem incapable of being cured of their fondness for Soviet leaders. In one poll, Russians were asked to list the 10 greatest people of all time, of all nations. Lenin came in second, Stalin fourth and Peter the Great came first.

...Something better than unceasing economic insecurity, private (and for many, unaffordable) health care and education, and vast inequality, is achievable. The Reds proved that. It was the reality in the Soviet Union, in China (for a time), in Eastern Europe, and today, hangs on in Cuba and North Korea, despite the incessant and far-ranging efforts of the United States to crush it.

In Defense of Soviet Waiters

- [In Defense of Soviet Waiters](#)

There’s been a bit of a discussion about affective labor going around. Paul Myerscough in the London Review of Books describes the elaborate code with which the Pret a Manger chain enforces an ersatz cheerfulness and dedication on the part of its employees, who are expected to be “smiling, reacting to each other, happy, engaged.” Echoing a remark of Giraudoux and George Burns, the most important thing to fake is sincerity: “authenticity of being happy is important.”

Tim Noah and Josh Eidelson elaborate on this theme, and Sarah Jaffe makes the point that this has always been an extremely gendered aspect of labor (waged and otherwise). She notes that “women have been fighting for decades to make the point that they don’t do their work for the love of it; they do it because women are expected to do it.” Employers, of course, would prefer equality to be established by imposing the love of work on both genders.

Noah describes the way Pret a Manger keeps “its sales clerks in a state of enforced rapture through policies vaguely reminiscent of the old East German Stasi.” I was reminded of the Soviet model too, but in a different way. I’m just old enough to remember when people talked about the Communist world as a really existing place rather than a vaguely defined bogeyman.

And one of the mundane tropes that always came up in foreign travelogues from behind the Iron Curtain concerned the notoriously surly service workers, in particular restaurant waiters. A 1977 newspaper headline reads “Soviet Union Takes Hard Look At Surly Waiters, Long Lines.” In a 1984 dispatch in the New York Times, John Burns reports that “faced with inadequate supplies,

low salaries and endless lines of customers, many Russians in customer-service jobs lapse into an indifference bordering on contempt.”

One can find numerous explanations of this phenomenon, from the shortcomings of the planned economy to the institutional structure of the Soviet service industry to the vagaries of the Russian soul to the legacy of serfdom.

But one factor was clearly that Soviet workers, unlike their American counterparts, were guaranteed jobs, wages, and access to essential needs like housing, education, and health care. The fear that enforces fake happiness among capitalist service workers — culminating in the grotesquery of *Pret a Manger* — was mostly inoperative in the Soviet Union. As an article in the *Moscow Times* explains:

During the perestroika era, the American smile was a common reference point when the topic of rude Soviet service was discussed. In an often-quoted exchange that took place on a late-1980s television talk show, one participant said, “In the United States, store employees smile, but everyone knows that the smiles are insincere.” Another answered, “Better to have insincere American smiles than our very sincere Soviet rudeness!”

With the collapse of the USSR and the penetration of Western capital into Russia, employers discovered a workforce that adapted only reluctantly to the norms of capitalist work discipline. A 1990 article in *USA Today* opens with a description of the travails facing the first Pizza Hut in the Soviet Union:

To open the first Pizza Hut restaurants in the Soviet Union, US managers had to teach Soviet workers how to find the “you” in USSR.

“We taught them the concept of customer service,” says Rita Renth, just back from the experience. “Things that come naturally to employees here we had to teach them to do: -smiling, interacting with customers, eye contact.”

In no time, however, the managers hit on what I’ve described as the third wave form of the work ethic. Rather than appealing to religious salvation or material prosperity, workers are told that they should find their drudgery intrinsically enjoyable:

The five US managers — and colleagues from Pizza Huts in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia and other nations — spent 12 to 14 hours a day drilling the Russians on service and food preparation, Pizza Hut style.

As a way of “motivating them to be excited about what they were doing, we made (tasks) like folding boxes into a contest,” Rae says. “When they finished, they said they couldn’t believe they would ever have fun at their jobs.”

That feeling, rare in Soviet workplaces, has been noticed. “A comment made by a lot of customers was that as soon as they walked in, they sensed a feeling of warmth,” Rae says.

It's the Pret a Manger approach to enforced cheerfulness (which had better be authentic!), combined with gamification, 1990-style. Along the same lines is this blog post from a business school professor, who recounts the experience of the first Russian McDonald's:

After several days of training about customer service at McDonald's, a young Soviet teenager asked the McDonald's trainer a very serious question: "Why do we have to be so nice to the customers? After all, WE have the hamburgers, and they don't!"

True enough. But while they may have had the hamburgers, with the collapse of Communism they no longer had steady access to the means of payment.

The brusqueness of customer service interactions has typically been interpreted as an indication of Communism's shortcomings, their low quality understood as a mark of capitalism's superiority. And it does indicate a contradiction of the Soviet model, which preserved the form of wage labor while removing many of the disciplinary mechanisms — the threat of unemployment, of destitution — that force workers to accept the discipline of the employer or the customers.

That contradiction comes to a head in a restaurant where both employees and customers are miserable. As the old saying goes, "they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work."

In his recent essay, Seth Ackerman cautions that present-day socialists shouldn't overlook the material shortcomings of the planned economies, and he notes that "the shabbiness of consumer supply was popularly felt as a betrayal of the humanistic mission of socialism itself." But service work is a bit different from the kind of material shabbiness he discusses, since the product and the worker are inseparable.

To demand what we've come to think of as "good service" is ultimately to demand the kind of affective — and affected — labor that we see throughout the service industry and especially in female-gendered occupations. Paul Myerscough is clearly unsettled by a system in which, "To guard against the possibility of Pret workers allowing themselves to behave even for a moment as if they were 'just here for the money,' the company maintains a panoptical regime of surveillance and assessment." But thirty years ago, journalists like Myerscough were the sort of people grouching about rude Moscow waiters.

In a system based on wage labor (or its approximation), the choice between company-enforced cheerfulness or authentic resentment is unavoidable. In other words, fake American smiles or sincere Soviet rudeness.

The customer service interaction under capitalism can hardly avoid the collision between fearful resentment and self-deluding condescension, of the sort Tim Noah enacts in his opening: "For a good long while, I let myself think that the slender platinum blonde behind the counter at Pret A Manger was in love with me." Perhaps it's time to look back with a bit of nostalgia on the surly Communist waiters of yore, whose orientation toward the system was at least transparent.

I have argued many times that the essence of the social-democratic project — and for the time being, the socialist project as well — is the empowerment of labor. By means of full employment, the separation of income from employment, and the organization of workers, people gain the ability to resist the demands of the boss.

But the case of affective labor is another example that shows why this supposedly tepid and reformist project is ultimately radical and unstable. Take away the lash of the boss, and you are suddenly forced to confront service employees as human beings with human emotions, without their company-supplied masks of enforced good cheer.

Revealing the true condition of service work can be a de-fetishizing experience, one just as jarring — and quite a bit closer to home — than finding out how your iPhone was manufactured. In both cases, we are made to confront unpleasant truths about the power relations that structure all of our experiences as consumers.

- [Socialism's Agenda Time by Stephen Gowans](#)

From 1928, when the Soviet Union laid the foundations of its socialist economy, until the late 1980s, when Gorbachev began to dismantle them, the Soviet economy grew without pause, except during the period of the Nazi war machine's scorched-earth invasion. Unemployment and later economic insecurity became ills of the past.

True, growth slowed beginning in the 1970s, but the major culprits were the diversion of budgets and R&D to the military to counter threats of US and NATO aggression, and growing resource extraction costs, not the alleged inefficiencies of public ownership and central planning, as is now widely believed. (1)

In fact, Soviet socialism—while it existed—worked better than capitalism in producing economic growth.

From 1928 to 1989, GDP per capita grew in the USSR by a factor of 5.2, compared to 4.0 in Western Europe and 3.3 in the major industrial offshoots of Western Europe—the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

And importantly, Soviet growth happened without the recurrent recessions—and their attendant pain in unemployment, hunger, and despair—that were routine features of the capitalist economies over the same period.

Indeed, while capitalism was mired in a major depression during the 1930s, leaving hundreds of millions without work, the Soviet economy was expanding rapidly, absorbing all available manpower. And while the dual ills of inflation and unemployment ran rampant in the stagflation crisis that roiled the capitalist economies during the 1970s, the Soviet economy expanded without interruption and without inflation or joblessness.

But that's not what we're told today. The received wisdom—rooted not in reality but Cold War propaganda—is that the Soviet economy collapsed under the weight of its inefficiencies, and that

the demise of the USSR proves that an economic system based on public ownership, central planning and production for use, is unworkable. Even many Marxists believe this, touting the merits of “market socialism” as the only workable alternative.

And yet the Soviet economy’s record of peacetime expansion and full employment remained unblemished until Gorbachev began to experiment with the very same market socialism that many Marxists now embrace.

Hence, Soviet socialism’s reputation for being unworkable is underserved. A slow-down in economic growth—having as much to do with US efforts to cripple the USSR by embroiling it in a ruinous arms race as it did with internal problems—has been transformed into a myth about economic collapse.

Myths work both ways. While they can turn successes into what appear to be failures, then can also turn failures into what appear to be successes.

So it is with capitalism. With a major bank bailout needed to rescue it, the US economy in recession on Main Street, European economies falling like dominoes under the weight of stagnation and mounting debt, and long-term unemployment stuck at alarmingly high levels with no sign of improvement, few people are pointing out the obvious: capitalism isn’t working. Had the Soviet economy’s record been as bad, it would have long ago been judged, not as inefficient, but as an inhumane disaster—a pox on humanity to be eradicated as quickly as possible.

- [Seven Myths about the USSR by Stephen Gowans](#)

The Soviet Union was dissolved 22 years ago, on December 26, 1991. It’s widely believed outside the former republics of the USSR that Soviet citizens fervently wished for this; that Stalin was hated as a vile despot; that the USSR’s socialist economy never worked; and that the citizens of the former Soviet Union prefer the life they have today under capitalist democracy to, what, in the fevered parlance of Western journalists, politicians and historians, was the repressive, dictatorial rule of a one-party state which presided over a sclerotic, creaky and unworkable socialist economy...

On March 17, 1991, nine months before the Soviet Union’s demise, Soviet citizens went to the polls to vote on a referendum which asked whether they were in favor of preserving the USSR. Over three-quarters voted yes. Far from favoring the breakup of the union, most Soviet citizens wanted to preserve it...

In 2009, Rossiya, a Russian TV channel, spent three months polling over 50 million Russians to find out who, in their view, were the greatest Russians of all time. Prince Alexander Nevsky, who successfully repelled an attempted Western invasion of Russia in the 13th century, came first. Second place went to Pyotr Stolypin, who served as prime minister to Tsar Nicholas II, and enacted agrarian reforms. In third place, behind Stolypin by only 5,500 votes, was Joseph Stalin

...From its inception in 1928, to the point at which it was dismantled in 1989, Soviet socialism never once, except during the extraordinary years of World War II, stumbled into recession, nor

failed to provide full employment. What capitalist economy has ever grown unremittingly, without recession, and providing jobs for all, over a 56 year span (the period during which the Soviet economy was socialist and the country was not at war, 1928-1941 and 1946-1989)? Moreover, the Soviet economy grew faster than capitalist economies that were at an equal level of economic development when Stalin launched the first five year plan in 1928—and faster than the US economy through much of the socialist system's existence. To be sure, the Soviet economy never caught up to or surpassed the advanced industrial economies of the capitalist core, but it started the race further back; was not aided, as Western countries were, by histories of slavery, colonial plunder, and economic imperialism; and was unremittingly the object of Western, and especially US, attempts to sabotage it. Particularly deleterious to Soviet economic development was the necessity of diverting material and human resources from the civilian to the military economy, to meet the challenge of Western military pressure. The Cold War and arms race, which entangled the Soviet Union in battles against a stronger foe, not state ownership and planning, kept the socialist economy from overtaking the advanced industrial economies of the capitalist West. And yet, despite the West's unflagging efforts to cripple it, the Soviet socialist economy produced positive growth in each and every non-war year of its existence, providing a materially secure existence for all.

...According to a just-released Gallup poll, for every citizen of 11 former Soviet republics, including Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, who thinks the breakup of the Soviet Union benefited their country, two think it did harm. And the results are more strongly skewed toward the view that the breakup was harmful among those aged 45 years and over, namely, the people who knew the Soviet system best.

...Given that more prefer the former socialist system to the current capitalist one, and think that the USSR's breakup has done more harm than good, we might infer that most aren't better off—or at least, that they don't see themselves as such. This view is confirmed, at least as regards life expectancy. In a paper in the prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet*, sociologist David Stuckler and medical researcher Martin McKee, show that the transition to capitalism in the former USSR precipitated a sharp drop in life-expectancy, and that “only a little over half of the ex-Communist countries have regained their pre-transition life-expectancy levels.” Male life expectancy in Russia, for example, was 67 years in 1985, under communism. In 2007, it was less than 60 years. Life expectancy plunged five years between 1991 and 1994

... Capitalist systems are structured to deliver public policy that suits capitalists, and not what's popular, if what's popular is against capitalist interests...What's popular doesn't always, or even often, prevail in societies where those who own and control the economy can use their wealth and connections to dominate the political system to win in contests that pit their elite interests against mass interests...A Russian return to socialism is far more likely to come about the way it did the first time, through revolution, not elections—and revolutions don't happen simply because people prefer a better system to the one they currently have. Revolutions happen when life can no longer be lived in the old way—and Russians haven't reached the point where life as it's lived today is no longer tolerable...

So, the Soviet Union's passing is regretted by the people who knew the USSR firsthand (but not by Western journalists, politicians and historians who knew Soviet socialism only through the

prism of their capitalist ideology.) Now that they've had over two decades of multi-party democracy, private enterprise and a market economy, Russians don't think these institutions are the wonders Western politicians and mass media make them out to be. Most Russians would prefer a return to the Soviet system of state planning, that is, to socialism.

Even so, these realities are hidden behind a blizzard of propaganda, whose intensity peaks each year on the anniversary of the USSR's passing. We're supposed to believe that where it was tried, socialism was popularly disdained and failed to deliver—though neither assertion is true.

Of course, that anti-Soviet views have hegemonic status in the capitalist core is hardly surprising. The Soviet Union is reviled by just about everyone in the West: by the Trotskyists, because the USSR was built under Stalin's (and not their man's) leadership; by social democrats, because the Soviets embraced revolution and rejected capitalism; by the capitalists, for obvious reasons; and by the mass media (which are owned by the capitalists) and the schools (whose curricula, ideological orientation and political and economic research are strongly influenced by them.)

So, on the anniversary of the USSR's demise we should not be surprised to discover that socialism's political enemies should present a view of the Soviet Union that is at odds with what those on the ground really experienced, what a socialist economy really accomplished, and what those deprived of it really want.

Do Publicly Owned, Planned Economies Work?

- [Do Publicly Owned, Planned Economies Work? by Stephen Gowans:](#)

The Soviet Union was a concrete example of what a publicly owned, planned economy could produce: full employment, guaranteed pensions, paid maternity leave, limits on working hours, free healthcare and education (including higher education), subsidized vacations, inexpensive housing, low-cost childcare, subsidized public transportation, and rough income equality. Most of us want these benefits. However, are they achievable permanently? It is widely believed that while the Soviet Union may have produced these benefits, in the end, Soviet public ownership and planning proved to be unworkable. Otherwise, how to account for the country's demise? Yet, when the Soviet economy was publicly owned and planned, from 1928 to 1989, it reliably expanded from year to year, except during the war years. To be clear, while capitalist economies plunged into a major depression and reliably lapsed into recessions every few years, the Soviet economy just as unfailingly did not, expanding unremittingly and always providing jobs for all. Far from being unworkable, the Soviet Union's publicly owned and planned economy succeeded remarkably well. What was unworkable was capitalism, with its occasional depressions, regular recessions, mass unemployment, and extremes of wealth and poverty, all the more evident today as capitalist economies contract or limp along, condemning numberless people to forced idleness. What eventually led to the Soviet Union's demise was the accumulated toll on the Soviet economy of the West's efforts to bring it down, the Reagan administration's intensification of the Cold War, and the Soviet leadership's inability to find a way out of the predicament these developments occasioned.

By the 1980s, the USSR was showing the strains of the Cold War. Its economy was growing, but at slower pace than it had in the past. Military competition with its ideological competitor, the United States, had slowed growth in multiple ways. First, R&D resources were being monopolized by the military, starving the civilian economy of the best scientists, engineers, and machine tools. Second, military spending had increased to meet the Reagan administration's abandonment of detente in favour of a renewed arms race that was explicitly targeted at crippling the Soviet economy. To deter US aggression, the Soviets spent a punishingly large percentage of GDP on the military while the Americans, with a larger economy, spent more in absolute terms but at a lower and more manageable share of national income. Third, to protect itself from the dangers of relying on foreign imports of important raw materials that could be cut off to bring the country to its knees, the Soviet Union chose to extract raw materials from its own vast territory. While making the USSR self-sufficient, internal sourcing ensnared the country in a Ricardian trap. The costs of producing raw materials increased, as new and more difficult-to-reach sources needed to be tapped as the older, easy-to-reach ones were exhausted. Fourth, in order to better defend the country, the Soviets sought allies in Eastern Europe and the Third World. However, because the USSR was richer than the countries and movements it allied with, it became the anchor and banker to other socialist countries, liberation movements, and states seeking to free themselves from despoliation by Western powers. As the number of its allies increased, and Washington manoeuvred to arm, finance, and support anti-communist insurgencies in an attempt to put added strain on the Soviet treasury, the costs to Moscow of supporting its allies mounted. These factors—corollaries of the need to provide for the Soviet Union's defence—combined to push costs to the point where they seriously impeded Soviet economic growth.

With growth slowing, and the costs of defending the country increasing, it appeared as if it was only a matter of time before the USSR would find itself between the Scylla of an untenable military position and the Charybdis of arms race-driven bankruptcy. Mikhail Gorbachev, the country's last leader, faced a dilemma: he could either bankrupt the economy by trying to keep pace with the Americans on arms spending or withdraw from the race altogether. Gorbachev chose the latter. He moved to end the Cold War, withdrawing military support from allies, and pledging cooperation with the United States. On the economic front, he set out to transform the Soviet Union into a Western-style social democracy. However, rather than rescuing the country from a future of ever slowing economic growth, Gorbachev's capitulations on foreign and economic policy led to disaster. With the restraining hand of the Soviet Union lifted, the United States embarked on a series of aggressions around the world, beginning with Iraq, proceeding to Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq again, and then Libya, with numerous smaller interventions in between. Gorbachev's abandonment of economic planning and efforts to clear the way for the implementation of a market economy pushed the country into crisis. Within five years, Russia was an economic basket case. Unemployment, homelessness, economic insecurity and social parasitism (living off the labour of others) returned with a vengeance.

On Christmas Day, 1991, the day the USSR officially ended, Gorbachev said, "We live in a new world. The Cold War is finished. The arms race and the mad militarization of states, which deformed our economy, society and values, have been stopped. The threat of world war has been lifted" (Roberts, 1999). This made Gorbachev wildly popular in the West. Russians were less enthusiastic. Contained within Gorbachev's words was the truth about why the world's first



conscious attempt to build an alternative to capitalism had been brought to a close. It was not because the Soviet economic system had proved unworkable. On the contrary, it had worked better than capitalism. The real reason for the USSR's demise was that its leadership capitulated to an American foe, which, from the end of World War II, and with growing vigour during the Reagan years, sought to arms race to death the Soviet economy. This was an economy that worked for the bottom 99 percent, and therefore, if allowed to thrive, would have discredited the privately owned, market-regulated economies that the top one percent favoured and benefited from. It was this model of free enterprise and market regulation which made vast wealth, security and comfort the prerogatives of captains of industry and titans of finance, and unemployment, poverty, hunger, economic insecurity, and indignity—the necessary conditions of the top one percent's riches—the lot of everyone else.

The 21 years since the defeat of the USSR have not been kind. Stalin, under whose tutelage the world's first publicly owned, planned economy was built, once issued a prophetic warning: "What would happen if capitalism succeeded in smashing the Republic of Soviets? There would set in an era of the blackest reaction in all the capitalist and colonial countries. The working class and the oppressed peoples would be seized by the throat, the positions of international communism would be lost" (Stalin, 1954). And just as Stalin had accurately prophesied 10 years before Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the USSR, that his country had only 10 years to prepare for an attack, so too did he accurately foresee the consequences of the Soviet Union's falling to the forces of capitalism. An era of the blackest reaction has, indeed, set in. Washington now has more latitude to use its muscular military to pursue its reactionary agenda around the world. Public ownership and planning hang on in Cuba and North Korea, but the United States and its allies use sanctions, diplomatic isolation and military harassment to sabotage the economies of the hold-outs (as they did the Soviet economy), so that the consequences can be falsely hung on what are alleged to be the deficiencies of public ownership and planning. They are in reality the consequences of a methodical program of low-level warfare. Encouraged to believe that the Soviet economic system had failed, many people, including both communist supporters and detractors of the Soviet Union, concluded that a system of public ownership and planning is inherently flawed. Communists abandoned communist parties for social democratic ones, or abandoned radical politics altogether. Social democrats shifted right, eschewing reform, and embracing neo-liberalism. In addition, Western governments, no longer needing to blunt the appeal of public ownership and planning, abandoned the public policy goal of full employment and declared robust public services to be no longer affordable (Kotz, 2001). At the same time, privatization in the former Soviet Union and formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe expanded the global supply of wage-labour, with predictable consequences for wage levels worldwide. The Soviet Union's defeat has ushered in a heyday for capital. For the rest of us, our throats, as Stalin warned, have been seized.

The world's largest capitalist economies have been in crisis since 2008. Some are trapped in an austerity death-spiral, some in the grips of recession, most growing slowly at best. Austerity—in reality the gutting of public services—is the prescribed pseudo-remedy. There is no end in sight. In some parts of Europe, official unemployment reaches well into the double-digits, youth unemployment higher still. In Greece, a country of 11 million, there are only 3.7 million employed (Walker and Kakaounaki, 2012). Moreover, the crisis can in no way be traced to an outside power systematically working to bring about capitalism's demise, as the United States

and its allies systematically worked to bring about the end of public ownership and planning in the USSR. Yet, free to develop without the encumbrance of an organized effort to sabotage it, capitalism is not working. Few point this out. By contrast, the Soviet model of public ownership and planning—which, from its inception was the target of a concerted effort to undermine it—never once, except during the extraordinary years of World War II, stumbled into recession, nor failed to provide full employment. Yet it is understood, including by some former supporters of the Soviet Union, to have been unworkable. Contrary to a widely held misconception, the experience of the Soviet Union did not demonstrate that an inherent weakness existed within its publicly owned, planned economy that doomed it to failure. It demonstrated, instead, the very opposite—that public ownership and planning could do what capitalism could not do: produce unrelenting economic growth, full employment, an extensive array of free and nearly free public services, and a fairly egalitarian distribution of income. Moreover, it could do so year after year and continued to do so until the Soviet leadership pulled the plug. It also demonstrated that the top one percent would defend private ownership by using military, economic, and ideological means to crush a system that worked against them but worked splendidly for the bottom 99 percent (an effort that carries on today against Cuba and North Korea.)

The defeat of the Soviet Union has, indeed, ushered in a period of dark reaction. The way out remains, as ever, public ownership and planning—which the Soviet experience from 1928 to 1989 demonstrates works remarkably well—and struggle against those who would discredit, degrade or destroy it.

The benefits of the Soviet economic system were found in the elimination of the ills of capitalism—an end to unemployment, inflation, depressions and recessions, and extremes of wealth and poverty; an end to exploitation, which is to say, the practice of living off the labour of others; and the provision of a wide array of free and virtually free public services.

Among the most important accomplishments of the Soviet economy was the abolition of unemployment. Not only did the Soviet Union provide jobs for all, work was considered a social obligation, of such importance that it was enshrined in the constitution. The 1936 constitution stipulated that “citizens of the USSR have the right to work, that is, are guaranteed the right to employment and payment for their work in accordance with quantity and quality.” On the other hand, making a living through means other than work was prohibited. Hence, deriving an income from rent, profits, speculation or the black market – social parasitism – was illegal (Szymanski, 1984). Finding a job was easy, because labour was typically in short supply. Consequently, employees had a high degree of bargaining power on the job, with obvious benefits in job security, and management paying close attention to employee satisfaction (Kotz, 2003).

Article 41 of the 1977 constitution capped the workweek at 41 hours. Workers on night shift worked seven hours but received full (eight-hour) shift pay. Workers employed at dangerous jobs (e.g., mining) or where sustained alertness was critical (e.g. physicians) worked six or seven-hour shifts, but received fulltime pay. Overtime work was prohibited except under special circumstances (Szymanski, 1984).

From the 1960s, employees received an average of one month of vacation (Keeran and Kenny, 2004; Szymanski, 1984) which could be taken at subsidized resorts (Kotz, 2003).

All Soviet citizens were provided a retirement income, men at the age of 60, and women at the age of 55 (Lerouge, 2010). The right to a pension (as well as disability benefits) was guaranteed by the Soviet constitution (Article 43, 1977), rather than being revocable and subject to the momentary whims of politicians, as is the case in capitalist countries.

Women were granted maternity leave from their jobs with full pay as early as 1936 and this, too, along with many other benefits, was guaranteed in the Soviet constitution (Article 122, 1936). At the same time, the 1936 constitution made provision for a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens, while the revised 1977 constitution obligated the state to help “the family by providing and developing a broad system of childcare...by paying grants on the birth of a child, by providing children’s allowances and benefits for large families” (Article 53). The Soviet Union was the first country to develop public childcare (Szymanski, 1984).

Women in the USSR were accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life (Article 122, 1936), including the equal right with men to employment, rest and leisure, social insurance and education. Among its many firsts, the USSR was the first country to legalize abortions, which were available at no cost (Sherman, 1969). It was also the first country to bring women into top government positions. An intense campaign was undertaken in Soviet Central Asia to liberate women from the misogynist oppression of conservative Islam. This produced a radical transformation of the condition of women’s lives in these areas (Szymanski, 1984).

The right to housing was guaranteed under a 1977 constitutional provision (Article 44). Urban housing space, however, was cramped, about half of what it was per capita in Austria and West Germany. The reasons were inadequate building in Tsarist times, the massive destruction of housing during World War II, and Soviet emphasis on heavy industry. Prior to the October Revolution, inadequate urban housing was built for ordinary people. After the revolution, new housing was built, but the housing stock remained insufficient. Housing draws heavily on capital, which the government needed urgently for the construction of industry. In addition, Nazi invaders destroyed one-third to one-half of Soviet dwellings during the Second World War (Sherman, 1969).

City-dwellers typically lived in apartment buildings owned by the enterprise in which they worked or by the local government. Rents were dirt cheap by law, about two to three percent of the family budget, while utilities were four to five percent (Szymanski, 1984; Keeran and Kenny, 2004). This differed sharply with the United States, where rents consumed a significant share of the average family budget (Szymanski, 1984), and still do.

Food staples and other necessities were subsidized, while luxury items were sold well above their costs.

Public transportation was efficient, extensive, and practically free. Subway fare was about eight cents in the 1970s, unchanged from the 1930s (Szymanski, 1984). Nothing comparable has ever existed in capitalist countries. This is because efficient, affordable and extensive public transportation would severely limit the profit-making opportunities of automobile manufacturers, petroleum companies, and civil engineering firms. In order to safeguard their profits, these firms

use their wealth, connections and influence to stymie development of extensive, efficient and inexpensive public alternatives to private transportation. Governments, which need to keep private industry happy so that it continues to provide jobs, are constrained to play along. The only way to alter this is to bring capital under public control, in order to use it to meet public policy goals set out in a consciously constructed plan.

The Soviet Union placed greater stress on healthcare than their capitalist competitors did. No other country had more physicians per capita or more hospital beds per capita than the USSR. In 1977, the Soviet Union had 35 doctors and 212 hospital beds per 10,000 compared to 18 doctors and 63 hospital beds in the United States (Szymanski, 1984). Most important, healthcare was free. That US citizens had to pay for their healthcare was considered extremely barbaric in the Soviet Union, and Soviet citizens “often questioned US tourists quite incredulously on this point” (Sherman, 1969).

Education through university was also free, and stipends were available for post-secondary students, adequate to pay for textbooks, room and board, and other expenses (Sherman, 1969; Szymanski, 1984).

Income inequality in the Soviet Union was mild compared to capitalist countries. The difference between the highest income and the average wage was equivalent to the difference between the income of a physician in the United States and an average worker, about 8 to 10 times higher (Szymanski, 1984). The elite’s higher incomes afforded privileges no greater than being able to acquire a modest house and car (Kotz, 2000). By comparison, in 2010, Canada’s top-paid 100 CEOs received incomes 155 times higher than the average full-time wage. The average full-time wage was \$43,000 (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2011). An income 10 times larger would be \$430,000—about what members of the capitalist elite make in a single week. A factor that mitigated the modest degree of Soviet income inequality was the access all Soviet citizens had to essential services at no, or virtually, no cost. Accordingly, the degree of material inequality was even smaller than the degree of income inequality (Szymanski, 1984).

Soviet leaders did not live in the opulent mansions that are the commonplace residences of presidents, prime ministers and monarchs in most of the world’s capitals (Parenti, 1997). Gorbachev, for example, lived in a four-family apartment building. Leningrad’s top construction official lived in a one-bedroom apartment, while the top political official in Minsk, his wife, daughter and son-in-law inhabited a two-bedroom apartment (Kotz and Weir, 1997). Critics of the Soviet Union accused the elite of being an exploiting ruling class, but the elite’s modest incomes and humble material circumstances raise serious doubt about this assessment. If it was indeed an exploiting ruling class, it was the oddest one in human history.

From the moment in 1928 that the Soviet economy became publicly owned and planned, to the point in 1989 that the economy was pushed in a free market direction, Soviet GDP per capita growth exceeded that of all other countries but Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. GDP per person grew by a factor of 5.2, compared to 4.0 for Western Europe and 3.3 for the Western European offshoots (the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) (Allen, 2003). In other words, over the period in which its publicly owned, planned economy was in place, the USSR’s record in raising incomes was better than that of the major industrialized capitalist countries. The Soviet Union’s

robust growth over this period is all the more impressive considering that the period includes the war years when a major assault by Nazi Germany left a trail of utter destruction in its wake. The German invaders destroyed over 1,500 cities and towns, along with 70,000 villages, 31,000 factories, and nearly 100 million head of livestock (Leffler, 1994). Growth was highest to 1970, at which point expansion of the Soviet economy began to slow. However, even during this so-called (and misnamed) post-1970 period of stagnation, GDP per capita grew 27 percent (Allen, 2003).

While Soviet GDP per capita growth rates compare favorably with those of the major capitalist economies, a more relevant comparison is with the rest of the world. In 1928, the Soviet Union was still largely an agrarian country, and most people worked in agriculture, compared to a minority in Western Europe and North America. Hence, the economy of the USSR at the point of its transition to public ownership and planning was very different from that of the industrialized Western capitalist countries. On the other hand, the rest of the world resembled the Soviet Union in also being largely agrarian (Allen, 2003). It is therefore the rest of the world, not the United States and other advanced industrialized countries, with which the USSR should be compared. From 1928 to 1989, Soviet GDP per capita not only exceeded growth in the rich countries but exceeded growth in all other regions of the world combined, and to a greater degree. Hence, not only did the publicly owned, planned economy of the Soviet Union outpace the economies of richer capitalist economies, it grew even faster than the economies of countries that were most like the USSR in 1928. For example, outside its southern core, Latin America's GDP per capita was \$1,332 (1990 US dollars), almost equal to the USSR's \$1,370. By 1989, the Latin American figure had reached \$4,886, but average income in the Soviet Union had climbed far higher, to \$7,078 (Allen, 2003). Public ownership and planning had raised living standards to a higher level than capitalism had in Latin America, despite an equal starting point. Moreover, while the Soviet peacetime economy unfailingly expanded, the Latin American economy grew in fits and starts, with enterprises regularly shuttering their doors and laying off employees.

Perhaps the best illustration of how public ownership and planning performed better at raising living standards comes from a comparison of incomes in Soviet Central Asia with those of neighboring countries in the Middle East and South Asia. In 1928, these areas were in a pristinely pre-industrial state. Under public ownership and planning, incomes grew in Soviet Central Asia to \$5,257 per annum by 1989, 32 percent higher than in neighboring capitalist Turkey, 44 percent higher than in neighboring capitalist Iran, and 241 percent higher than in neighboring capitalist Pakistan (Allen, 2003). For Central Asians, it was clear on which side of the Soviet Union's border standards of living were highest.

Advocates of a free enterprise economy would have you believe that public ownership and planning stifle innovation, while free enterprise encourages it. If that is the case, how do we explain:

- That the Soviet Union beat the United States into space in the 1950s, piling up a record of firsts in space exploration, and consequently setting off a panic in Washington?
- Most of the innovations in the United States, from the internet to Google's search engine algorithm to advanced drugs and the i-Phone, are based, not on private investment, but government funding?

In fact, the truth about innovation is the exact opposite of what free-enterprise promoters would have us believe. It is not free enterprise, but planning and public funds, that drive it.

Soviet accomplishments in space, considered in light of the mistaken view that the USSR was always a poor second-best to the supposedly more dynamic United States, is truly startling. Soviet achievements include the first satellite, first animal in orbit, first human in orbit, first woman in orbit, first spacewalk, first moon impact, first image of the far side of the moon, first unmanned lunar soft landing, first space rover, first space station and first interplanetary probe. The panic created in Washington after the allegedly innovation-stifling Soviet economy allowed the USSR to beat its much richer ideological rival into space galvanized the United States to take a leaf from the Soviet book. Just as the Soviets were doing, Washington would use public funds to power research into innovations. This would be done through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The DARPA would channel public money to scientists and engineers for military, space and other research. Many of the innovations to come out of the DARPA pipeline would eventually make their way to private investors, who would use them for private profit (Mazzucato, 2011). In this way, private investors were spared the trouble of risking their own capital, as free enterprise mythology would have us believe they do. In this myth, far-seeing and bold capitalists reap handsome profits as a reward for risking their capital on research that might never pay-off. Except this is not how it works. It is far better for investors to invest their capital in ventures with less risk and quicker returns, while allowing the public to shoulder the burden of funding R&D with its many risks and uncertainties. Using their wealth, influence and connections, investors have successfully pressed politicians into putting this pleasing arrangement in place. Free enterprise reality, then, is based on the sucker system: Risk is “socialized” (i.e., borne by the public, the suckers) while benefits are “privatized” (by investors who have manipulated politicians into shifting to the public the burden of funding R&D.)

A study by Block and Keller (2008) found that between 1971 and 2006, 77 out of R&D Magazine’s top 88 innovations had been fully funded by the US government. Summarizing research by economist Mariana Mazzucato, Guardian columnist Seumas Milne (2012) points out that the

[a]lgorithms that underpinned Google’s success were funded by the public sector. The technology in the Apple iPhone was invented in the public sector. In both the US and Britain it was the state, not big pharma, that funded most groundbreaking ‘new molecular entity’ drugs, with the private sector then developing slight variations. And in Finland, it was the public sector that funded the early development of Nokia – and made a return on its investment.

Nuclear power, satellite and rocket technology, and the internet are other examples of innovations that were produced with public money, and have since been used for private profit. US president Barack Obama acknowledged the nature of the swindle in his 2011 State of the Nation Address. “Our free-enterprise system,” began the president, “is what drives innovation.” However, he immediately contradicted himself by saying, “But because it’s not always profitable for companies to invest in basic research, throughout history our government has provided cutting-edge scientists and inventors with the support that they need.”

All of this points to two important facts. (1) The United States kick-started innovation in its economy by emulating the Soviet model of state-directed research because free enterprise was not up to the task. (2) Rather than emulate the Soviet model for public benefit, the United States channels public money into R&D for private profit. From the second point can be inferred a third: The fact that the Soviets socialized the benefits that flow from socialized risk, while the United States privatizes them, reflects the antagonistic nature of the two societies: One, a mass-oriented society organized to benefit the masses; the other, a business society organized to benefit a minority of business owners. Capitalism, as the US president acknowledges, does not promote innovation, because “it is not always profitable for companies to invest in basic research.” On the other hand, state-directed funding is the source of innovation. Clearly, then, a political agenda has nurtured two myths: (a) That a system of public ownership and planning stifles innovation; (b) That the profit system stimulates it.

While the Soviet economy grew rapidly from 1928 to 1989 it never surpassed the economies of North America, Western Europe and Japan. Consequently, the USSR’s per capita income was always less than that of the industrialized capitalist economies. The comparative disadvantage in incomes and living standards was falsely attributed to the alleged inefficiencies of public ownership and planning, rather than to the reality that, having started further back than the rich capitalist countries, the Soviet Union had more ground to cover. When the race began in 1928, the Soviet Union was still a largely agrarian country while the United States was industrialized. Hence, the Soviet Union had to cover ground the United States had already covered when Russia was under the stifling rule of Tsarist tyranny. Moreover, it had to do so without riches extracted from other countries, as the United States, Britain, France and Japan had based part of their prosperity on exploiting their own formal and informal empires (Murphy, 2000). True, the USSR did have an empire of sorts—countries in Eastern Europe over which it exercised hegemony, but, except in the early post-WWII years, these countries were never exploited economically by the Soviet Union. If anything, the Soviets, who exported raw materials to Eastern Europe in return for manufactured goods, came out on the losing end of its trade relationship with its satellites. So long as they remained part of the Warsaw Pact—a defensive alliance formed after and in response to the creation of NATO—and maintained some semblance of public ownership and planning, Moscow allowed its Eastern European allies to chart their own course. Soviet hegemony, then, was limited to enforcing these two conditions (Szymanski, 1979).

By the mid-1970s there was serious concern in Washington that the Soviet economy was on a course to overtake that of the United States. Since Washington always pointed to the United States’ greater average income and higher living standards to mobilize the allegiance of its population to the free enterprise system, a Soviet lead would deal a mortal blow to the legitimacy of US capitalism. Careful estimates prepared in the United States showed that Soviet gross national product was gaining on that of the United States. In 1950, the Soviet economy was only one-third the size of the US economy but had grown to almost one-half only eight years later (Sherman, 1969). From the perspective of planners in Washington in the late 1950s, the danger loomed that at current rates of growth, the Soviet economy would overtake the US economy by 1982. At that point, the entire foundation of the US population’s belief in the legitimacy of free enterprise—that it produced higher living standards than public ownership and planning—would crumble. Something had to be done.

By 1975, the CIA estimated that the Soviet economy was 60 percent as large as the US economy (Kotz and Weir, 1997). However, Soviet economic growth was starting to slow. According to figures provided by Allen (2003), Soviet GDP per capita grew at an annual rate of 3.4 percent from 1928 to 1970, but at less than half that rate, 1.3 percent, from 1970 to 1989. Had the United States, alarmed at being beaten into space, and agitated by what seemed to be the very real prospect of being overtaken economically by the USSR, set out to sabotage Soviet economic progress?

The Cold War was never going to be kind to Soviet growth prospects. Soviet leaders recognized that a planned, publicly owned economy was an anathema to the captains of industry and titans of finance who use their wealth and connections to dominate policy in capitalist countries. The USSR had been invaded multiple times, and on two occasions by aggressive capitalist powers with the objective of wiping the Soviet system off the map. In order to deter future aggressions, it was necessary to keep pace militarily. Therefore, the Soviet Union struggled as best as it could to achieve a rough military parity to maintain a peaceful coexistence with its capitalist neighbours (Szymanski, 1979).

However, the smaller size of the Soviet economy relative to that of its ideological competitors created problems. The necessity of maintaining a rough military parity would mean spending a far higher percentage of GDP on the military compared to what the United States and other NATO countries spent on their armed forces. Resources that could otherwise have been deployed to industrial expansion to help the country catch up economically had instead to be channelled into self-defence (Murphy, 2000). From the 1950s through the 1970s, the Soviets spent 12 to 14 percent of their GDP on the military (Szymanski, 1984; Allen, 2003), a figure that would grow even higher later, when the Reagan administration hiked US military spending, anticipating a Soviet effort to keep up that would harm the USSR's economy.

Another constraint imposed on the Soviet economy by the need to deter military aggression was the monopolization of R&D resources by the military. Keeping pace militarily involved an unceasing battle to catch up to US military innovations. When the United States exploded the first atom bomb in 1945, the Soviet Union raced to match the United States' grim scientific feat, which it did four years later. The US introduction of the hydrogen bomb in 1952 was quickly followed by the Soviets exploding their own hydrogen bomb a year later. A US first in submarine-launched nuclear missiles was matched by the USSR a few years after. No major weapon was developed by the USSR first, with a single exception—the ICBM. Unlike the United States, the USSR had no military bases ringing its ideological rival, and therefore needed a way of delivering nuclear warheads over long distances. However, the aim was self-defence, and that the Soviet Union was usually in catch-up mode on weapons systems demonstrated that the United States was spurring the Cold War forward, not the USSR. For the Soviets, the Cold War was economic poison. For the Americans, the Cold War was a way to ruin the Soviet economy.

Because self-defence was a priority, the USSR's best scientists and engineers were channelled into the military sector (Sherman, 1969). Soviet consumer goods were often said to have been of low quality, but no one ever said the same about Soviet military equipment. The reason why is clear: the military got first dibs on the best minds and best equipment and was never short of



funding. There is a subsidiary point: high-quality Soviet arms were produced by a system of public ownership and planning, despite the myth that such a system is incapable of producing high-quality goods (Kotz, 2008). The necessity of channelling the bulk of, and best, R&D resources to the military meant that other sectors suffered, and GDP growth was impeded. For example, the Soviets floundered in their efforts to increase petroleum production because the metals, machinery, scientists and engineers needed to boost oil output were detailed to the military sector (Allen, 2003). Half of the machine tools produced and at least half of the R&D expenditures were going to the defence industry (Schweizer, 1994).

Another reason for the post-1975 slowdown in the Soviet economy was that the USSR had become ensnared in a Ricardian trap (Allen, 2003). The Soviet Union had an abundant supply of all the raw materials an industrial economy needed, and at first, they were easy to reach and therefore could be obtained at low cost. For example, in the early years of the USSR's industrialization, open pit mines were dug near industrial centres. Minerals were close to the surface and could be transported over short distances to nearby factories. Therefore, production and transportation costs were minimal. However, over time, the minerals that were close to the surface were scooped out and pits became deeper and narrower. At deeper depths, the quantity of minerals that could be extracted diminished and the costs of reaching them increased. Eventually, the mines were exhausted, and new mines had to be opened, but at greater distances from industrial centres, which meant higher costs to transport raw materials to factories. The Soviet petroleum industry was equally caught in a Ricardian trap. In the early 1970s, the USSR was spending \$4.6 billion per year to maintain its oil industry. As oil became more difficult to reach, the Soviets had to drill deeper and through harder rocks. Costs increased, reaching \$6.0 billion by the end of the decade. By the early 1980s, costs had climbed to \$9.0 billion a year (Schweizer, 1994). The Soviets could have escaped the Ricardian trap by shopping around for less expensive imports. However, that would have left them vulnerable to supply disruptions. The United States and its allies—who would always be hostile to the USSR, except when expediency dictated temporary alliances or easing of tension—could interdict raw materials heading to the USSR to bring the Soviet economy to its knees or extort concessions. In other words, given the very high likelihood that the United States would exploit opportunities to place the Soviet Union at a disadvantage, shopping around for cheap imports, rather than implementing a policy of resource self-sufficiency, was not a realistic option.

Another reason the Soviet economy slowed was that the costs to the USSR to support its allies began to mount to unsustainable levels. One way to bolster self-defence is to find friends who share the same enemy, and the Soviet Union set out to expand its alliance of friends by providing economic and military assistance to countries and movements hostile to the forces of reaction. In doing so, it became the banker for national liberation movements, Eastern European socialist countries, and various Third World countries seeking to escape and remain free from domination by powerful capitalist states. By 1981, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies had 96,000 economic advisers in 75 countries and 16,000 military advisers in 34 countries, together with a contingent of 39,000 Cuban troops in Africa, an army for which Moscow was ultimately footing the bill. At the same time, the Soviets were picking up the tab for 72,000 Third World students enrolled in Soviet and East European universities (Miliband, 1989). By 1980, Moscow was spending \$44 billion a year on its allies (Keeran and Kenny, 2004). It gave \$4.5 billion in aid to Warsaw from August 1980 to August 1981 alone to help contain the US-supported

Solidarity movement (Schweizer, 1994). Meanwhile, the war in Afghanistan was draining the Soviet treasury to the tune of \$3 to \$4 billion per year. In other words, the costs of sustaining allies had grown enormous, raw material costs were mounting, the best scientists, engineers and machine tools were being monopolized by the military, and military expenditures were consuming a punishingly large percentage of national income.

A large part of the predicament the Soviets found themselves in was due to a decision the Reagan administration had taken to try to cripple the Soviet economy. In October 1983, US president Ronald Reagan unveiled what would become known as the Reagan Doctrine. "The goal of the free world must no longer be stated in the negative, that is, resistance to Soviet expansionism," announced the US president. Instead, the "goal of the free world must instead be stated in the affirmative. We must go on the offensive with a forward strategy of freedom" (Roberts, 1999). This was a declaration of the end of détente. The gloves were off.

More formally, the Reagan Doctrine was spelled out in a series of national security decision directives, or NSDDs. NSDD-66 announced that it would be US policy to disrupt the Soviet economy, while NSDD-75 committed the United States to trying to drive up costs in the Soviet economy in order to plunge the USSR into a crisis. The Soviet economy was to be squeezed, and one of the ways was to induce Moscow to increase its defence budget (Schweizer, 1994). A hi-tech arms race would be the key. It would not only force Moscow to divert more resources to the military, but would channel even more of the USSR's scientists, engineers, machine tools, and budget into military R&D, reducing productive investments and hobbling the civilian economy even more than the Cold War already had. The aim was to force the USSR "to expend precious lifeblood to run a race against a more athletic foe" (Schweizer, 1994), a foe which had a larger economy and more resources to last the race because it had started at a higher level of development and was plundering various countries around the world of their riches.

Over the first six years of his presidency, Reagan more than doubled US military expenditures, buying 3,000 warplanes, 3,700 strategic missiles, and close to 10,000 tanks (Schweizer, 1994). To keep up, Soviet military spending, previously at 12 to 14 percent of GDP, started to climb. Already twice as large as the United States' as a percentage of national income (Silber, 1994) the defence budget grew larger still. Military expenditures increased by 45 percent in five years, considerably outpacing growth in the Soviet economy. By 1990, the Soviets were spending more than 20 percent of the country's GDP on defence (Englund, 2011). At the same time, Moscow increased its military R&D spending nearly two-fold. In the spring of 1984, Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko announced that 'the complex international situation has forced us to divert a great deal of resources to strengthening the security of our country' (Schweizer, 1994).

Meanwhile, the Reagan administration had taken a page out of Che Guevara's book. The Argentine revolutionary had called for not one, not two, but three Vietnams, to drain the US treasury. Turning Che's doctrine against communism, CIA Director Bill Casey called for not one, not two, but a half a dozen Afghanistans. To bog down the Soviets in "their own Vietnam," the Afghan mujahedeen were showered with money and arms. In Poland, financial, intelligence, and logistical support was poured into the Solidarity movement, forcing Moscow to increase support to the Polish government (Schweizer, 1994).

The Soviet media complained that the United States wanted to impose “an even more ruinous arms race,” adding that Washington hoped the Soviet economy would be exhausted (Izvestiya, 1986). Soviet foreign secretary Andrei Gromyko complained that the United States’ military build-up was aimed at exhausting the USSR’s material resources and forcing Moscow to surrender. Gorbachev echoed Gromyko, telling Soviet citizens that,

The US wants to exhaust the Soviet Union economically through a race in the most up-to-date and expensive space weapons. It wants to create various kinds of difficulties for the Soviet leadership, to wreck its plans, including in the social sphere, in the sphere of improving the standard of living of our people, thus arousing dissatisfaction among the people with their leadership (Schweizer, 1994).

By the mid-1980s, it was clear in both Washington and Moscow that the Soviet Union was in trouble. It was not that the system of public ownership and planning was not working. On the contrary, recognizing the advantages of the Soviet system, the United States itself had emulated it to stimulate innovation in its own economy. Moreover, the Soviet economy was still reliably expanding, as it had done every year in peacetime since Stalin had brought it under public control in 1928. However, defending the country in the face of a stepped up Cold War was threatening to choke off economic growth altogether. It was clear that Moscow’s prospects for keeping pace with the United States militarily, while at the same time propping up allies under attack by US-fuelled anti-communist insurgencies and overthrow movements, were far from sanguine. The United States had manoeuvred the Soviet Union into a trap. If Moscow continued to try to match the United States militarily, it would eventually bankrupt itself, in which case its ability to deter US aggression would be lost. If it did not try to keep pace, it could no longer deter US aggression. No matter which way Moscow turned, the outcome would be the same. The only difference was how long it would take the inevitable to play out.

Gorbachev chose to meet the inevitable sooner rather than later. His foreign affairs adviser, Anatoly Chernayaev, recalls that it was “an imperative for Gorbachev that we had to put an end to the Cold War, that we had to reduce our military budget significantly, that we had to limit our military industrial complex in some way” (Schweizer, 1994). The necessity of reining in the defence budget was echoed by another Gorbachev adviser, Aleksandr Yokovlev, who would later recall that “It was clear that our military spending was enormous and we had to reduce it” (Blum, 1995). Gorbachev therefore withdrew support from allies and pledged cooperation with the United States. This was a surrender. The capitulation was hidden behind honeyed phrases about promoting international cooperation and fostering universal human values, but the rhetoric did not hide the fact that Gorbachev was throwing in the towel. He described the surrender as a victory for humanity, declaring that he had averted “the threat of nuclear war,” ended the “nuclear arms race,” reduced “conventional armed forces,” settled “numerous regional conflicts involving the Soviet Union and the United States,” and replaced “the division of the European continent into hostile camps with ... a common European home” (Gorbachev, 2011). In reducing the threat of a global nuclear conflagration, Gorbachev had indeed achieved a victory for humanity. However, the victory was brought about by caving in to the United States, which was now free to run roughshod over countries that were too weak to refuse US demands that they yield to US political, military and economic domination.

On domestic matters, Gorbachev—who identified himself with the virtually social democratic position of the Italian Communist Party (Hobsbawm, 1994)—tried to turn the Soviet Union into a Western-style social democracy (Roberts, 1999). He cited the need to reverse the slowdown in the Soviet economy as his rationale for the transition (Gorbachev, 1988). Economic growth had certainly slowed, and there was indeed a danger that continued slow growth would threaten the country's position vis-à-vis its capitalist rivals. However, Gorbachev's solution amounted to, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." The planning apparatus, which had unfailingly charted a course for unrelenting growth during peacetime, was dismantled, in order to move the economy toward regulation by market forces. Rather than boosting economic growth, as Gorbachev hoped, the abandonment of planning did the very opposite. The economy tumbled headlong into an abyss, from which the USSR's successor countries would not emerge for years. As one wag put it, "Stalin found the Soviet Union a wreck and left it a superpower; Gorbachev found it a superpower and left it a wreck." Gorbachev is still widely admired in the West, but his popularity stops at the Russian border. A March 2011 poll found that only one in 20 Russians admire the Soviet Union's last leader, and that "perestroika," the name for Gorbachev's move toward a market economy, "has almost purely negative connotations" (Applebaum, 2011).

With few exceptions, what passes for serious discussion of the USSR is shot through with prejudice, distortion, and misconception. Locked in battle with the Soviet Union for decades, Washington deliberately fostered misunderstandings of its ideological foe. The aim was to make the USSR appear bleak, brutal, repressive, economically sluggish and inefficient—not the kind of place anyone of sound mind would want to emulate or live in. Today, scholars, journalists, politicians, state officials, and even some communists repeat old Cold War propaganda. The Soviet economy, in their view, never worked particularly well. However, the truth of the matter is that it worked very well. It grew faster over the period it was publicly owned and planned than did the supposedly dynamic US economy, to say nothing of the economies of countries that were as undeveloped as the USSR was in 1928, when the Soviet economy was brought under public control. The Soviet economy was innovative enough to allow the USSR to beat the United States into space, despite the United States' greater resources, an event that inspired the Americans to mimic the Soviet Union's public support for R&D. Moreover, the Soviet system of public ownership and planning efficiently employed all its capital and human resources, rather than maintaining armies of unemployed workers and inefficiently running below capacity, as capitalist economies regularly do. Every year, from 1928 to 1989, except during the war years, the Soviet economy reliably expanded, providing jobs, shelter, and a wide array of low- and no-cost public services to all, while capitalist economies regularly sank into recession and had to continually struggle out of them on the wreckage of human lives.

The US National Intelligence Council warns ominously that a crisis-prone world economy could produce chaos and distress on an even greater scale than the last crisis (Shanker, 2012). Offering a "grim prognosis" on the world economy, the UN warns of "a new global recession that mires many countries in a cycle of austerity and unemployment for years" (Gladstone, 2012). Yet at the same time, we are told that the Soviet economy never worked, and that capitalism, with its regular crises, and failure to provide employment, food, clothing and shelter to all, is both the only game in town and the superior system. Clearly, it is neither superior—on the contrary, it is clearly inferior—nor it is the only choice. Not only can we do better, we have done better. It is time to tear down the wall of politically engineered misconceptions about public ownership and

planning. For too long, the wall has kept us from seeing a viable alternative model to capitalism whose track record of unequalled success points to a realistic and possible future for the bottom 99 percent—a future free from unemployment, recessions, extremes of wealth and poverty, and where essential goods and services are available at no cost to all.

#### Soviet era trains comfortable

- [Why are soviet-era Russian trains so comfortable?:](#)

The Chinese may have the most efficient and comprehensive rail network in the world, the Scandinavians may have the most expensive trains, but those soviet-era Russian trains leave everyone well behind when it comes to comfort. They comprise one of the less noticed legacies of the USSR. I've travelled a few by now: Moscow to Beijing, Sofia to Kiev to Simferopol, St Petersburg to Helsinki, St Petersburg to Moscow, Moscow to Minsk, Minsk to Riga ...

For instance, even second class on the Red Arrow, from St. Petersburg to Moscow beats any first class train in Western Europe:

The regular day train from Moscow to Minsk is one of those extremely solid and reliable affairs:

They provide a whole berth, with pillows and blankets, should you feel like an afternoon snooze:

As for the overnight from Minsk to Riga, well ...

Apart from the plush comfort of the sleeper compartment, they also boast those magnificent stainless steel toilets that simply open onto the track. No toilet is more pleasurable:

Replace these trains? Not for a long time yet, since they are continually repainted and refurbished. After all, if you've built something solid and to last, why replace it?

Try sitting on the hard, uncomfortable seats of a train in Western Europe after travelling on these and you'll see what I mean.

#### Soviet war memorial in Berlin

- [Soviet War Memorial – Treptower Park, Berlin:](#)

One of the more stunning parts of east Berlin is the Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park. It's the main memorial to the Soviet taking of Berlin – yes, it was the Soviets who captured Berlin and put an end to Hitler's efforts. 5,000 of the 80,000 Soviet soldiers who died in the battle are buried here.

Designed as a whole by Yakov Belopolsky, each of the gates leads you into the central avenue:

Your eyes are directed to the towering statue of young soldier, holding a German child while his sword rests on a broken swastika:

What grabs me are the 16 stone sarcophagi, one each for the republics of the USSR. There are 8 on each side, flanking the central area.

Lenin's here, the collective embodiment of and inspiration for the troops:

But the most heart-warming moment is to discover that good old Iosef Stalin is everywhere:

Or rather, direct quotations from the man are on each of the sarcophagi. On one side they are in German, on the other in Russian:

The man is everywhere – as he should be, since the 'victory of 1945 in Europe was above all his' (David Roberts). Churchill and Roosevelt may have been dispensable and the war still won. Not so Stalin, for he was 'indispensable to the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany'. So, at the most important of war memorials in Berlin, Stalin is there to stay, inscribed in stone.

And so are plenty of communist symbols:

So if you have some time in Berlin, forget the crappy tourist spots, the sausages and the beer (well, maybe not the beer), and get yourself to Treptower Park. There's plenty of others there as well.

Is Putin the new Stalin?

- [Is Putin the new Stalin?](#)

Chavez dead today – sadly. The remembrance yesterday of Stalin's death, 60 years ago. Once again the issue is the veneration of the revolutionary leader. Familiar themes emerge with Chavez once again: the bodily health of the leader becomes a major focus; fears concerning the viability of the project emerge after his or her death; the forces of opposition line up, especially the USA, seeking to exploit what is perceived as an opportunity to overrun the place in question.

But here I'm interested in Stalin, or rather what was written about him yesterday. Three stories did the rounds, reappearing here and there. The most breathtaking was an effort to attribute to Putin and his henchmen the increasing popularity of Stalin in the Russian Federation. Of course, it can't be due to any genuine appreciation of the man. Let's see what Putin is supposed to have done:

1. Putin is responsible for school textbooks that speak of Stalin's 'effective management' during the 1930s program of industrialization.
2. He has been behind a campaign to return to name of Stalingrad to the city of Volgograd, the site of the battle that turned the tide of the Second World War.
3. He praises Stalin's achievement of expanding Russia's territory in the form of the USSR, describing the dismantling of the USSR under Gorbachev as a major disaster.
4. He has failed to condemn Stalin's repressions, murders, gulags, failures at the Olympics, and pretty much every other sin in Russian history.

So is Putin the new Stalin? Hardly, since it is clear that he is responding to both the increasing popularity of Stalin among the population, and the growing popularity of the Communist Party under the leadership of Gennady Zyuganov.

However, when the articles in question do note the widespread popularity of Stalin, they fall back on an old trope: the natural propensity of Russians to superstition. This was a line used in response to the veneration of Lenin after his death, and we find it here with all manner of icons of Stalin, signs of the cross, lighting candles in churches, and beliefs in Stalin's mystical powers. Can't have people really appreciating the man.

A different perspective on Belarus

- [A different perspective on Belarus:](#)

I have been reading with much interest Grigory Ioffe's *Understanding Belarus and How Western Foreign Policy Misses the Mark* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). Clumsy title, I know, but intriguing book. He deals with post-1991 Belarus, on language, independence, identity, economy and politics. Most intriguing is the treatment of the economy. If we are to believe the corporate media, if not economic 'experts', Belarus's economy should have collapsed ages ago. Yet, throughout the 2000s the Belarusian economy actually grew, achieving 9.9 percent growth in 2006. How is this possible, especially in light of sanctions against Belarus? The country refused to undergo the 'shock therapy' imposed (and enthusiastically embraced by those who stood to gain) in neighbouring Russia, Ukraine and other parts of the former Eastern Bloc. The initial move to privatisation was blocked, with the aim of developing a 'socially oriented market economy'. Thus, all of the main enterprises remain in state control, with only a quarter of the economy in private hands. Most Belarusians simply saw no sense in squandering the significant industrial base that had been built up during the USSR, as they also saw no sense in destroying universal health care, education and so on. Life had been steadily improving for decades, so why change it now? But did they really rely on Russian subsidies? Ioffe points out that Belarus has one of the most open trade policies, especially for its industrial products.

What about Alexander Lukashenka, who was first elected as president in 1994? The demonizations are myriad: 'authoritarian cesspool', 'outpost of tyranny', 'bastard of Europe' and the usual 'last dictator of Europe'. Yet, Ioffe convincingly shows that Lukashenka consistently has widespread popular support. He admits that a few extra votes may have appeared from somewhere, but even without them, observers admit that he would have won the presidential elections anyway. So what is his secret? He is of humble rustic origins, speaking in the way of normal people (before he became president, he was the director of a collective farm). He has also presided over steady economic growth that is agreed to be socially equitable, which even more remarkable given international efforts to ruin the economy. And he stands up for Belarus when needed (for instance, during the Russia-Belarus trade war of 2006-7). The intelligentsia hates him, mocking his mode of speech and his policies, but above all for depriving them of the power they feel is their birthright. By contrast, Lukashenka has an uncanny ability to sense what common people are feeling. As one of them put it, he is 'our Sashka [an affectionate diminutive]; people have a gut feeling that he is their man'.

## Socialist Belarus rocks

- [Socialist Belarus rocks:](#)

Belarus is a kick-arse country, usually off the radar for most. What's so good about it? We arrived on a slow train from Moscow to find a country that is a model for what the Eastern Bloc should have done after 1989. Belarus had the balls to resist the vicious and retributive 'shock therapy' imposed by Western Europe and the USA in the 1990s. The result: nearly all industry is state-owned, unemployment is around 0.6 percent, Stalin-era buildings define a city like Minsk, the place is well-maintained and feels great to visit. In short, it is still very much a socialist country. More on Belarus soon, but a few choice morsels.

Lenin stands proudly outside the government buildings in Minsk:

New constructions boast the USSR, such as this mural from the metro system (there's plenty more around Minsk):

The government continues good old soviet propaganda, like this around the construction site for the world ice hockey championships in 2014:

They still have the KGB! This glorious building – the KGB headquarters – sits right on the main thoroughfare, so you can simply stroll past.

And in a more reflective moment, you can find yourself at the crossroads between Marx and Lenin:

If you want to see eastern European communism in the 21st century, get yourself to Belarus. We'll definitely be back. (ht cp)

## Without theory we are dead

- [Without theory we are dead](#)

Sergey sent me this great link to Zyuganov's speech on the auspicious day of 27 October this year. As everyone should know, Zyuganov is the chairman of the central committee of the Russian Communist Party. And the event was the 14th joint plenum of that committee. The theme: the importance of and need to renew Marxist theory. He points out that Gorbachev took advantage of theoretical stagnation in Marxist thought and was thereby able to defeat the CPSU ideologically. It was the mark of a liberal-bourgeois revolution, from which it was a short step to the dismantling of the USSR. Perestroika is the signal of that ideological defeat. Of course, he calls for a deep re-engagement with the work of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, the latter of whom observed: 'Without theory we are dead'.

But – and here it becomes really interesting – he has quite a bit to say about religion. He reasserts the old party platform of freedom of conscience in the party on matters of religion, the need for religious institutions and the party to operate in peaceful coexistence, indeed to attract people



with religious belief to the party. And then he quotes Stalin to kick off a discussion concerning radical and revolutionary forms of religion, so much so that they share the goals of scientific socialism. Che Guavara turns up, as does Hugo Chavez, along with liberation theology. All of them oppose the Golden Calf of capital, whether socialist, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and so on.

And in outlining the measures needed for theoretical renewal that criticises the mistakes made and draws lessons from the achievements of the past – in terms of history, philosophy, science, religion and so on – he points out: ‘Soviet socialism is not only the past, but the future of Russia’.

I wonder if they need a resident theologian.

Stalin the communist

- [Stalin the communist?](#)

Stalin has not had a great press, although I have suggested once or twice that the man was a little more ambivalent than the standard accounts would have it. So something more to add to the mix. It comes from a book called Towards a New Socialism by W. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell.

They argue quite persuasively that the full implementation of a communist economic system happened under Stalin. Through the five year plans beginning in the late 1920s the capitalist mode of extracting surplus value was replaced by a planned economy, in which surplus was controlled and allocated by the planning mechanism.

Under Soviet planning, the division between the necessary and surplus portions of the social product was the result of political decisions. For the most part, goods and labour were physically allocated to enterprises by the planning authorities, who would always ensure that the enterprises had enough money to ‘pay for’ the real goods allocated to them. If an enterprise made monetary ‘losses’, and therefore had to have its money balances topped up with ‘subsidies’, that was no matter. On the other hand, possession of money as such was no guarantee of being able to get hold of real goods. By the same token, the resources going into production of consumer goods were centrally allocated. Suppose the workers won higher ruble wages: by itself this would achieve nothing, since the flow of production of consumer goods was not responsive to the monetary amount of consumer spending. Higher wages would simply mean higher prices or shortages in the shops. The rate of production of a surplus was fixed when the planners allocated resources to investment in heavy industry and to the production of consumer goods respectively (pp. 4-5).

The key to this momentous shift was the old issue of compulsion: how do you encourage workers and peasants to engage in the new system? Under the circumstances of such rapid change and in the face of a sustained threat from international capitalism, that compulsion took the form of carrot and stick. Genuine revolutionary fervour characterised much of the effort, but for those less inclined to engage, forced labour, exile and ‘terror’ were deployed. Crucial to this process was the personality cult of Stalin, who embodied the sheer grit (thereby making up for

what he lacked in oratorical skill) of the revolutionary ‘miracle’ required to adopt such a radically new economic system. Stalin was thereby able both to promote a deep sense of ‘participation in a great historic endeavour’, but he was also the ‘stern and utterly ruthless liquidator of any who failed so to participate’. I would add that this combination, along with the deep strength of the communist economic system, enabled the extraordinary recovery during the Second World War and the eventual victory by the USSR over Germany and fascism. Interesting bloke, our Stalin.

Bloody amazing trip

- [Bloody Amazing Trip from Sofia to Yalta – by train](#)

The full story soon enough, but this was one of those epic rail journeys, three days and nights without a wash, border guards who have developed the fine art of waking you in the middle of the night just when you fall into a deep sleep, bangs, thunks and shudders from an old, heavy train rolling slowly along tracks, and countries most people have never heard about. The first leg was on that old run from Sofia to Moscow (mostly the Roman script was pretty much absent, so an ability to read Cyrillic is somewhat advantageous):

We travelled through four countries on the way – Bulgaria, crossing the Danube at Russe into Romania, Moldova and then the Ukraine (I got off in Kiev). A cosy corner for me, with bags of food and bottles of water. Thankfully they had toilet paper, since I’d forgotten that:

A late night stop in Bucharest:

And then at Ungheni on the Moldovan border (the old border of the Soviet Union) I was roused from my snooze by a swaying, banging carriage. WTF, I thought, until I saw they had jacked the carriage up and were changing the rolling stock:

Apparently, the rail gauge was deliberately varied on the border in order to deny those pesky capitalist Americans a free ride into the USSR should they invade. They’d have to stop first for three hours to change over all their wheels.

The Moldovan border guards were nice bunch, as were the Romanians, but not so the Ukrainians. I was up for four hours from 1.30 am, questioned, had sniffer dogs in my compartment, had police, army, airforce, navy and the rest searching the train high and low. The reason: drugs had been ‘found’ in the toilet:

But it all went the way of whatever else enters such collective receptacles:

Kiev at last. Grimy and fucking freezing, I had a squizz at the famous city:

Final leg was a luxurious and clean Ukrainian train from Kiev to Simferopol. Ukraine certainly has the right approach to train conductors:

And they know how to pamper you:

One more night on the train and I was in Simferopol in the Crimea. Boris met me and insisted I board a mini-bus for the two-hour run over the mountains to Yalta. The driver was one of those multiskilled types, able to smoke, talk on his mobile phone, change gear with his little finger and overtake slow trucks on tight mountain corners – at the same time. A shit, shower and shave in Yalta and I was whisked away to a conference on Religion and Civil Society – all in Russian, but I had a lovely Tartar woman whispering the translation into my ear. At the end of this long day I finally sat down to a warm meal, only to be set upon by a singing troupe:

The evening ended with vodka-fuelled Ukrainians and Russians dancing wildly away to old Soviet numbers. I even shared a toast to the Soviet Union with some Russian Marxists.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/views>

## US-Soviet Relations

Library of Congress's assessment

As noted on [their page](#) on the subject

Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States were driven by a complex interplay of ideological, political, and economic factors, which led to shifts between cautious cooperation and often bitter superpower rivalry over the years. The distinct differences in the political systems of the two countries often prevented them from reaching a mutual understanding on key policy issues and even, as in the case of the Cuban missile crisis, brought them to the brink of war. The United States government was initially hostile to the Soviet leaders for taking Russia out of World War I and was opposed to a state ideologically based on communism. Although the United States embarked on a famine relief program in the Soviet Union in the early 1920s and American businessmen established commercial ties there during the period of the New Economic Policy (1921–29), the two countries did not establish diplomatic relations until 1933. By that time, the totalitarian nature of Joseph Stalin's regime presented an insurmountable obstacle to friendly relations with the West. Although World War II brought the two countries into alliance, based on the common aim of defeating Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union's aggressive, antidemocratic policy toward Eastern Europe had created tensions even before the war ended. The Soviet Union and the United States stayed far apart during the next three decades of superpower conflict and the nuclear and missile arms race. Beginning in the early 1970s, the Soviet regime proclaimed a policy of détente and sought increased economic cooperation and disarmament negotiations with the West. However, the Soviet stance on human rights and its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 created new tensions between the two countries. These tensions continued to exist until the dramatic democratic changes of 1989–91 led to the collapse during this past year of the Communist system and opened the way for an unprecedented new friendship between the United States and Russia, as well as the other new nations of the former Soviet Union. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the ensuing Civil War produced acute food shortages in southwestern Russia. Wartime devastation was compounded by two successive seasons of drought, and by 1920 it was clear that a full-scale famine was under way in the Volga River Valley, Crimea, Ukraine, and Armenia. Conditions were so desperate that in early 1920 the Soviet government sent out a worldwide appeal for food aid to avert the starvation of millions of

people. Several volunteer groups in the United States and Europe had by then organized relief programs, but it became clear that help was needed on a larger scale because an estimated 10 to 20 million lives were at stake. Although it had not officially recognized the Soviet regime, the United States government was pressed from many sides to intervene, and in August 1920 an informal agreement was negotiated to begin a famine relief program. In 1921 President Warren Harding appointed Herbert Hoover, then secretary of commerce, to organize the relief effort. Congress authorized \$20 million, and Hoover proceeded to organize the American Relief Administration (ARA) to do the job. Under Hoover's terms, the ARA was to be a completely American-run relief program for the transport, storage, and delivery of relief supplies (mainly food and seed grain) to those in the famine region. After Soviet officials agreed, hundreds of American volunteers were dispatched to oversee the program. The ARA gradually earned the trust of the local Communist authorities and was given a virtually free hand to distribute thousands of tons of grain, as well as clothing and medical supplies. This remarkable humanitarian effort was credited with saving many millions of lives. ARA aid continued into 1923, by which time local farms were again producing and the famine's grip was broken. Hoover and his ARA were later honored by the Soviet government for the care and generosity that the United States had shown in this desperate crisis. During the 1920s and early 1930s, tensions between the Soviet Union and the West eased somewhat, particularly in the area of economic cooperation. Following their consolidation of political power, the Bolsheviks faced the same economic challenge as had the government ministers of the tsarist regime: how to efficiently organize the vast natural and human resources of the Soviet Union. The economic situation was made even more difficult by the immense social and economic dislocation caused by World War I, the revolutions of 1917, and the Civil War of 1918–21. As factories stood idle and famine raged in the countryside, Vladimir Lenin instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921 to infuse energy and direction into the fledgling Communist-controlled economy. NEP retreated from Communist orthodoxy and opened up the Soviet monolith economically. For a variety of reasons—compassion for the sufferings of the Soviet peoples, sympathy for the great “socialist experiment,” but primarily for the pursuit of profit—Western businessmen and diplomats began opening contacts with the Soviet Union. Among these persons were Averell Harriman, Armand Hammer, and Henry Ford, who sold tractors to the Soviet Union. Such endeavors facilitated commercial ties between the Soviet Union and the United States, establishing the basis for further cooperation, dialogue, and diplomatic relations between the two countries. This era of cooperation was never solidly established, however, and it diminished as Joseph Stalin attempted to eradicate vestiges of capitalism and to make the Soviet Union economically self-sufficient. The Soviet Communist party evolved from the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party's Bolshevik wing formed by Vladimir Lenin in 1903. Lenin believed that a well-disciplined, hierarchically organized party was necessary to lead the working class in overthrowing capitalism in Russia and the world. In November 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in St. Petersburg (then called Petrograd) and shortly thereafter began using the term Communist to describe themselves. In March 1918, the Bolsheviks named their party the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). The next year, they created the Communist International (Comintern) to control the Communist movement throughout the world. After the Comintern's dissolution in 1943, the Soviet party's Central Committee continued to use Communist parties from other nations as instruments of Soviet foreign policy. Each national party was required to adhere to the Leninist principle of subordinating members and organizations unconditionally to the decisions of higher authorities. Strongly influenced by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, American

socialists and radicals met in Chicago in 1919 to organize an American Communist party. But the Americans were so divided they created two parties instead. One group consisted primarily of relatively recent Russian and East European immigrants, who emphasized adherence to Marxist orthodoxy and proletarian revolution. The other group, dominated by native-born, somewhat more pragmatic American radicals, sought mass influence. Such conflicting goals combined with the discrepancy between Communist doctrine and American reality, kept the Communist movement in the United States a small sectarian movement. In 1922 the Comintern forced the two American parties, which consisted of about 12,000 members, to amalgamate and to follow the party line established in Moscow. Although membership in the American party rose to about 75,000 by 1938, following the Great Depression, many members left the party after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939. Others left in 1956 after Nikita Khrushchev exposed some of Stalin's crimes and Soviet forces invaded Hungary. Only the hard-core members remained after such reversals of Soviet policy. The American party, a significant although never major political force in the United States, became further demoralized when Boris Yeltsin outlawed the Communist party in Russia in August 1991 and opened up the archives, revealing the continued financial as well as ideological dependency of the American Communists on the Soviet party up until its dissolution. Despite deep-seated mistrust and hostility between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies, Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 created an instant alliance between the Soviets and the two greatest powers in what the Soviet leaders had long called the "imperialist camp": Britain and the United States. Three months after the invasion, the United States extended assistance to the Soviet Union through its Lend-Lease Act of March 1941. Before September 1941, trade between the United States and the Soviet Union had been conducted primarily through the Soviet Buying Commission in the United States. Lend-Lease was the most visible sign of wartime cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union. About \$11 billion in war matériel was sent to the Soviet Union under that program. Additional assistance came from U.S. Russian War Relief (a private, nonprofit organization) and the Red Cross. About seventy percent of the aid reached the Soviet Union via the Persian Gulf through Iran; the remainder went across the Pacific to Vladivostok and across the North Atlantic to Murmansk. Lend-Lease to the Soviet Union officially ended in September 1945. Joseph Stalin never revealed to his own people the full contributions of Lend-Lease to their country's survival, but he referred to the program at the 1945 Yalta Conference saying, "Lend-Lease is one of Franklin Roosevelt's most remarkable and vital achievements in the formation of the anti-Hitler alliance." Lend-Lease matériel was welcomed by the Soviet Union, and President Roosevelt attached the highest priority to using it to keep the Soviet Union in the war against Germany. Nevertheless, the program did not prevent friction from developing between the Soviet Union and the other members of the anti-Hitler alliance. The Soviet Union was annoyed at what seemed to it to be a long delay by the allies in opening a "second front" of the Allied offensive against Germany. As the war in the east turned in favor of the Soviet Union, and despite the successful Allied landings in Normandy in 1944, the earlier friction intensified over irreconcilable differences about postwar aims within the anti-Axis coalition. Lend-Lease helped the Soviet Union push the Germans out of its territory and Eastern Europe, thus accelerating the end of the war. With Stalin's takeover of Eastern Europe, the wartime alliance ended, and the Cold War began. The guns of distant battles fell silent long ago, but unanswered questions concerning United States servicemen missing in action and unrepatriated prisoners of war continue to concern the nation. Recently, the missing and prisoners of war from the Vietnam War have been the focus of attention. But Soviet archival

documents—from an earlier era after World War II—reveal that Americans were detained, and even perished, in the vast Soviet GULAG. To find out additional information about Americans liberated from German prison camps by the Red Army and then interned in Soviet camps, the U.S./Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs was formed early in 1992. Library of Congress officials, among others, have been authorized to research Russian archival materials on the subject in Moscow. Through such efforts and additional cooperation, the fate of those missing in the Cold War may become known as well. Russian news reports tell of a United States B-29 aircraft shot down by Soviet interceptors over the Baltic Sea in April 1950. One of the Soviet pilots who downed the B-29 reported that the aircraft was recovered from the sea, but the fate of the crew is unknown. The history of warfare cruelly suggests that some questions concerning the missing in action and prisoners of war will never be answered. Nevertheless, candor, goodwill, and a spirit of cooperation on all sides can minimize such questions. The opening of archives is a step forward in getting at the truth which can clear up the confusion and suspicion created in the past. The Western democracies and the Soviet Union discussed the progress of World War II and the nature of the postwar settlement at conferences in Tehran (1943), Yalta (February 1945), and Potsdam (July–August 1945). After the war, disputes between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies, particularly over the Soviet takeover of East European states, led Winston Churchill to warn in 1946 that an “iron curtain” was descending through the middle of Europe. For his part, Joseph Stalin deepened the estrangement between the United States and the Soviet Union when he asserted in 1946 that World War II was an unavoidable and inevitable consequence of “capitalist imperialism” and implied that such a war might reoccur. The Cold War was a period of East-West competition, tension, and conflict short of full-scale war, characterized by mutual perceptions of hostile intention between military-political alliances or blocs. There were real wars, sometimes called “proxy wars” because they were fought by Soviet allies rather than the USSR itself—along with competition for influence in the Third World, and a major superpower arms race. After Stalin's death, East-West relations went through phases of alternating relaxation and confrontation, including a cooperative phase during the 1960s and another, termed *détente*, during the 1970s. A final phase during the late 1980s and early 1990s was hailed by President Mikhail Gorbachev, and especially by the president of the new post-Communist Russian republic, Boris Yeltsin, as well as by President George Bush, as beginning a partnership between the two states that could address many global problems. After World War II, Joseph Stalin saw the world as divided into two camps: imperialist and capitalist regimes on the one hand, and the Communist and progressive world on the other. In 1947, President Harry Truman also spoke of two diametrically opposed systems: one free, and the other bent on subjugating other nations. After Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev stated in 1956 that imperialism and capitalism could coexist without war because the Communist system had become stronger. The Geneva Summit of 1955 among Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, and the Camp David Summit of 1959 between Eisenhower and Khrushchev raised hopes of a more cooperative spirit between East and West. In 1963 the United States and the Soviet Union signed some confidence-building agreements, and in 1967 President Lyndon Johnson met with Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin in Glassboro, New Jersey. Interspersed with such moves toward cooperation, however, were hostile acts that threatened broader conflict, such as the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 and the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia of 1968. The long rule of Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982) is now referred to in Russia as the “period of stagnation.” But the Soviet stance toward the United States became less overtly hostile in the early 1970s. Negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union resulted

in summit meetings and the signing of strategic arms limitation agreements. Brezhnev proclaimed in 1973 that peaceful coexistence was the normal, permanent, and irreversible state of relations between imperialist and Communist countries, although he warned that conflict might continue in the Third World. In the late 1970s, growing internal repression and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a renewal of Cold War hostility. Soviet views of the United States changed once again after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in early 1985. Arms control negotiations were renewed, and President Reagan undertook a new series of summit meetings with Gorbachev that led to arms reductions and facilitated a growing sympathy even among Communist leaders for more cooperation and the rejection of a class-based, conflict-oriented view of the world. With President Yeltsin's recognition of independence for the other republics of the former USSR and his launching of a full-scale economic reform program designed to create a market economy, Russia was pledged at last to overcoming both the imperial and the ideological legacies of the Soviet Union. According to Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs, in May 1962 he conceived the idea of placing intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Cuba as a means of countering an emerging lead of the United States in developing and deploying strategic missiles. He also presented the scheme as a means of protecting Cuba from another United States-sponsored invasion, such as the failed attempt at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. After obtaining Fidel Castro's approval, the Soviet Union worked quickly and secretly to build missile installations in Cuba. On October 16, President John Kennedy was shown reconnaissance photographs of Soviet missile installations under construction in Cuba. After seven days of guarded and intense debate in the United States administration, during which Soviet diplomats denied that installations for offensive missiles were being built in Cuba, President Kennedy, in a televised address on October 22, announced the discovery of the installations and proclaimed that any nuclear missile attack from Cuba would be regarded as an attack by the Soviet Union and would be responded to accordingly. He also imposed a naval quarantine on Cuba to prevent further Soviet shipments of offensive military weapons from arriving there. During the crisis, the two sides exchanged many letters and other communications, both formal and "back channel." Khrushchev sent letters to Kennedy on October 23 and 24 indicating the deterrent nature of the missiles in Cuba and the peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union. On October 26, Khrushchev sent Kennedy a long rambling letter seemingly proposing that the missile installations would be dismantled and personnel removed in exchange for United States assurances that it or its proxies would not invade Cuba. On October 27, another letter to Kennedy arrived from Khrushchev, suggesting that missile installations in Cuba would be dismantled if the United States dismantled its missile installations in Turkey. The American administration decided to ignore this second letter and to accept the offer outlined in the letter of October 26. Khrushchev then announced on October 28 that he would dismantle the installations and return them to the Soviet Union, expressing his trust that the United States would not invade Cuba. Further negotiations were held to implement the October 28 agreement, including a United States demand that Soviet light bombers also be removed from Cuba, and to specify the exact form and conditions of United States assurances not to invade Cuba.

#### Soviet Perceptions of the United States

This [book](#) is divided into six chapters:

- 1— Economy and Society



- 2— The American Political System
- 3— The Foreign-Policy Mechanism and Other Influences
- 4— U.S. Policy Makers
- 5— Policy Expectations and Implications
- 6— Conclusions

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/ussovietrelations>

## What was the Soviet view of US history?

The Soviets, opposed ideologically to the capitalist values of the United States, had much to say. In the first issue of *Soviet History*, a publication by a loyal comrade, [a translated section of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, about US history](#), is reprinted, with corrections and additions to improve readability, with over 150 footnotes and relevant photographs and graphics. This section of the Encyclopedia was written in 1956, during the first years of Nikita Khrushchev, but it is still sufficiently critical of US history in a way that even rivals "people's" historians like Howard Zinn.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietviews/ushistory>

## How did the Soviets view the US labor movement?

They had many views on this subject, apart from noting Communist involvement in the labor movement, with wild accusations everywhere [by the US government](#). There is a three-volume set on this subject:

- ["Recent History of the Labor Movement in the United States: 1918-1939"](#)
- ["Recent History of the Labor Movement in the United States: 1939-1965"](#)
- ["Recent History of the Labor Movement in the United States: 1965-1980"](#)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/sovietviews/labor>

Cominform is the Information Bureau on Communist and Workers' Parties, it was [dissolved in 1956](#) as a part of Khrushchev's revisionism.

## Cominform publications

- [For Lasting Peace: For A People's Democracy!](#), declaration of Communist Parties, 1947.
- [Cominform Conferences](#), 1947-1949
- [COMMUNIQUE: Meeting of Information Bureau of the Communist Parties](#), July 1948.
- [The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute](#), includes inter-party correspondence, in 1948, between Communist Parties of Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, along with Cominform.
- [Meeting of Information Bureau of Communist Parties](#), 1949 in Hungary.
- [Working Class Unity for Peace!](#), 1950, republishing three reports and three resolutions from the previous year



- [Cominform on colonial and dependent countries](#), 1950-1953.
- [Problems with Economics](#), 1952
- On the death of Stalin in 1953 in the [Daily Express](#), [Daily Herald](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Daily Mirror](#), [The Evening News](#), [The Star](#), and a statement of [the Communist Party in London](#) along with [Soviet News](#), also [here](#) and [here](#).

<https://www.reddit.com/r/SovietHistory/wiki/faq/soviethistory/cominform>